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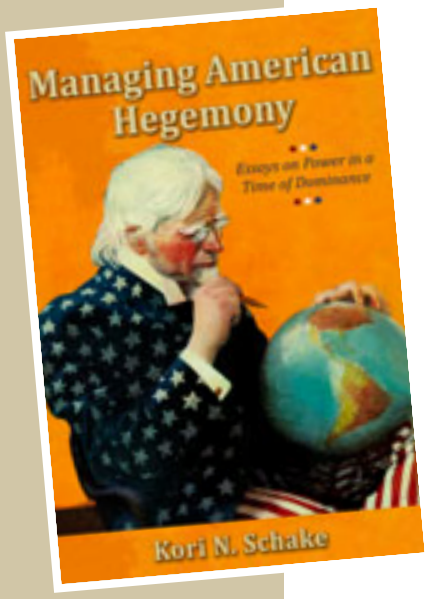

Managing American Hegemony

Essays on Power in a Time of Dominance

BY KORI N. SCHAKE

Schake examines key questions about the United States' position of power in the world, including Why is the United States' power so threatening? Is it sustainable? Does military force still matter? How can we revise current practices to reduce the U.S. cost of managing the system? What accounts for the United States' stunning success in the round of globalization that swept across the international order at the end of the twentieth century? The author also offers suggestions on which issues the next president should focus on to build an even stronger foundation of U.S. power.

She concludes that the United States has succeeded internationally for reasons deeply rooted in the political culture of the country, namely, tolerance of risk and failure, veneration of individual initiative, encouragement of immigration, fewer constraints on social and economic mobility than most other countries, and—critically—a malleable, absorptive definition of itself.

Kori N. Schake is senior policy adviser to the McCain campaign. She is on leave from being a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and the Distinguished Professor of International Security Studies at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York.

December 2008, 208 pages
ISBN: 978-0-8179-4901-3 $25.00, cloth
ISBN: 978-0-8179-4902-0 $15.00, paper

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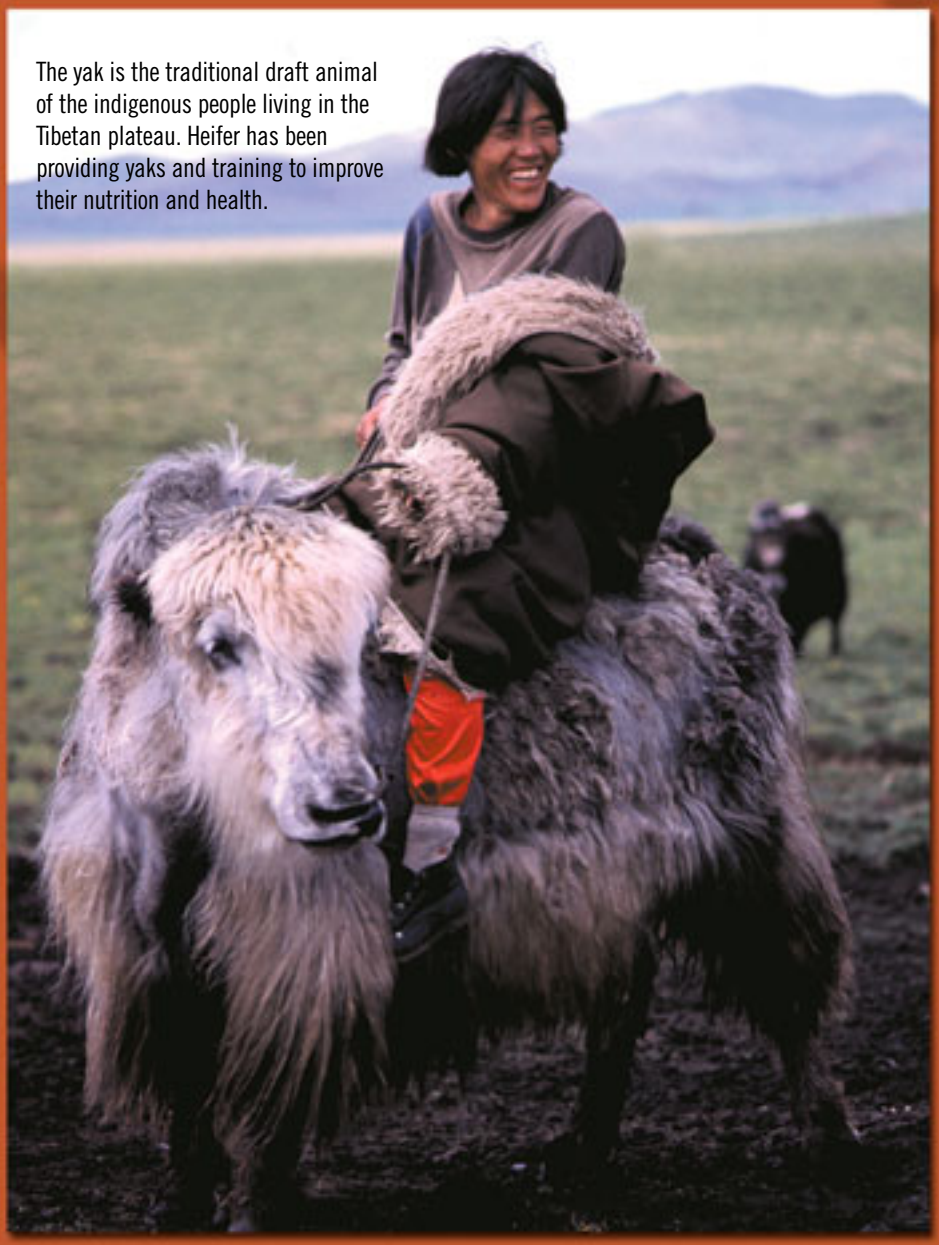
The Gift of Self-Reliance



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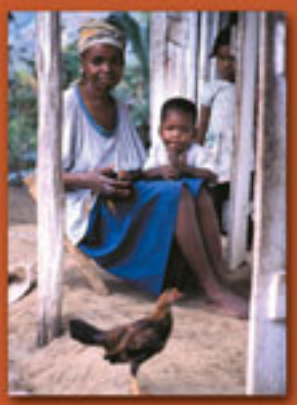

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The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of News America Incorporated, is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, second week in July, and fourth week in August) at 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington D.C. 20036. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 50108, Boulder, CO 80322-0108. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders and changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 50108, Boulder, CO 80322-0108. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-850-682-7644 for subscription inquiries. American Express, Visa/MasterCard payments accepted. Cover price, $3.95. Back issues, $3.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036. Copyright 2009, News America Incorporated. All rights reserved. No material in The Weekly Standard may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. The Weekly Standard is a registered trademark of News America Incorporated.

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The Ongoing Saga of 'Obamaweek'

Newsweek's worshipful coverage of Barack Obama is a familiar theme in these precincts, but it's gotten so habitual and, well, semi-biological in the past several weeks that we cannot, in conscience, poke fun at it anymore.

It's more embarrassing, even disturbing, than funny. Last week's issue, for instance, featured a cover illustration of a curious, Dante's Inferno-style universe—"The New Global Elite"—with you-know-who depicted in the center of it all, looking appropriately cool and distant, surrounded by the names of Bill Gates, Nicolas Sarkozy, Michael Bloomberg, the Dalai Lama, *Newsweek* investor Warren Buffet, and others in a kind of wheel of world importance.

Open the magazine and there's another picture of Obama reaching out to hundreds of proffered hands; on the next page is Barack in Berlin waving to the global multitudes; and two pages after that we find Michelle Obama looking smart and capable and stylish and—well, you get the idea.

What strikes us, however, is the contrast between the worship of its heroes and the snarky, even juvenile, tone with which *Newsweek* treats its villains—Sarah Palin, Dick Cheney, Phil Gramm, George W. Bush, et al. receive such elegant epithets as "chump," "shopaholic," and "dumbest." Meanwhile, extravagantly affectionate clichés are trotted out for the likes of Edward Kennedy ("That lion can still roar"), cable TV's Rachel Maddow ("Brilliant, ebullient"), and, of course, the aforementioned Obamas, Michelle ("smart, classy, real, fun, responsible") and her husband ("the right man for the right time").

The most revealing word in the entire issue, however, may be found in a brief obituary description of William F. Buckley Jr. See if you can guess the word:

> Sure, he was the father of American conservatism, the founder of *National Review* and the champion of Goldwater and Reagan. But he also had one of the century's most perspicacious, peripatetic minds (and he loved sesquipedalian words).

If you chose "sesquipedalian" because it so perfectly captures the condescending tone of the item, you would be close to the answer. But no, the strategic word is the "but" that begins that second sentence, and informs us that even though Buckley was one of those mouth-breathing, Bible-thumping, cousin-marrying conservatives, he may well have had an IQ that was nearly as high as *Newsweek* editor Jon Meacham's.

Well, no, not that high. Any editor can transform a moderate-to-liberal weekly news magazine into a teen fanzine for the Loony Left. But it takes a genuine intellect to seize the reins of a respectable (if moribund) franchise in weekly journalism and drive it, swiftly and decisively, into the ground. ♦

Poetry Corner

Claudia Rosett, a Scrapbook friend and occasional contributor to these pages, was like many of us taken aback to hear that great litterateur, Governor Rod 'Effin' Blagojevich of Illinois, citing some lines from Rudyard Kipling's "If" as part of his blustering press statement the week before Christmas. The Scrapbook muttered a few choice Blagojevichian adjectives at the desecration, but Rosett took the poetical high road, with an update of Kipling:

If . . . Kipling Only Knew

If you can keep your job while all about you
Are fielding bribes and blaming it on you,
If you can duck the Feds while all men doubt you,
And bleep-ing show the charges are untrue,
If you can fight and not be tired by fighting,
Or, being wiretapped, profess surprise,
Or argue that there will be no indicting
Because it's all a bleep-ing pack of lies.

If you can scheme—but never scheme in writing,
If you can talk—but not from your home phone,
If you can face the press and keep reciting
That truth is on your side, though you're alone;
If you can bear to hear the bleeps you've spoken
Quoted on Fox TV and "Meet the Press"
Or watch that Senate seat become a token
Of all the things they'd like you to confess

If you can just accuse them all of spinning
And quote a bit of Kipling on the way
And comb your hair and somehow keep on grinning
And tell them no one ever paid to play;
If you can force them to accept your own rights
To publicly refuse this bitter cup,
And fight them till you've drained yourself of sound bites,
Except the Will to say to them: "Shut up!"

If you once walked with Rezko and Obama
Or spoke with Jesse Junior and with Rahm
If you can overcome this legal drama,
If you can show that no one greased your palm
If you can take that Senate seat and fill it
With someone who will swear you're not a knave
Yours is the Land of Lincoln, and yet still it
Will have Kipling rolling over in his grave.

To which, we can only add, if you are not already reading the Rosett Report, where these verses first appeared, you should be pointing your web browser without delay to *pajamasmedia.com/claudiarosett*. ♦

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When You're Here, You're Family

It's not even January and the future first lady is already confronted by a grave dilemma: Cookbook author Ron Douglas is offering Michelle Obama $1 million to publish her favorite family recipes, with 100 percent of the profits going to a charity of her choosing. According to a press release, "Michelle Obama charmed the hearts of Americans with her down-to-earth nature. People are hungry to learn as much about the Obamas as possible. . . . If Michelle is willing to accept the offer, the book will be printed on recycled paper and use soy-based inks to uphold the Obamas' green initiatives."

It sure sounds too good to be true. Maybe it is. As the press release reveals, Ron Douglas is the author of *America's Most Wanted Recipes* (volumes one and two), which features dishes from such places as the Olive Garden, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Red Lobster, and Applebee's. Not to sound too much like a food snob, but The Scrapbook is slightly wary about such culinarily questionable associations. Does Michelle Obama really want her recipes published in the same spirit as the Olive Garden's fettuccine Alfredo, Red Lobster's Lobster Fondue, or Applebee's Baby Back Ribs? Considering all the negative publicity the Obamas garnered from their affiliations with Reverend Jeremiah Wright and Bill Ayers, we trust Mrs. Obama will weigh her options—and maybe hold out for an offer from the Food Network instead. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'I am writing another book about the Middle East because the . . . " (from *We Can Have Peace in the Holy Land* by Jimmy Carter). ♦

Great Moments in Acknowledgments

'My weblog has remained my primary workspace, along with my weekly column for Scripps Howard News Service and my periodic articles in *Esquire*. Among the many bloggers, readers and frequent commentators who deserve my special thanks for connecting me to so many sources over the past few years are: 54th Bn CEF, 77gramp77, a517dogg, Al Alborn, Alicescheshirecat, Allen, Andrew in Baghdad, Andrew Sullivan . . . " (*Great Powers: America and the World After Bush* by Thomas P.M. Barnett). ♦

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Casual

Shades of Green

I swam through the most beautiful coral reef recently: large quantities of vibrant elkhorn coral just a few feet below the water's surface. When healthy, coral supports a vast network of underwater life, and the reef was full of Sergeant Majors, Butterflyfish, Fairy Basslets, Gobys, Trunkfish, Parrotfish of every variety, and even a Porcupinefish. It was a technicolor display in crystal clear, turquoise water.

I was snorkeling about 100 feet off of Necker Island in the British Virgin Islands. Necker is the private property of one Sir Richard Branson, England's answer to Donald Trump. He's a busy figure in the BVI these days, having recently bought a second island—the nearby Mosquito, which he wants to turn into the world's most environmentally friendly resort—and generally pushing "green" causes like wind and solar power (and less green ones like better air access to the islands). His initiatives get a lot of press in America and Britain, yet the locals don't always seem so keen (though their government likes the publicity the self-obsessed billionaire's habits bring to the country).

Mosquito is part of the chain of islands that make up the North Sound of Virgin Gorda—a large anchorage that during the Age of Sail sheltered the British West Indies squadrons from hurricanes and remains a destination for sailors the world over. Necker sits just beyond and is far more secluded. Branson has made it into an ultra luxury rental—$46,000 a night right now, going up to $51,000 in 2009—with a Great House and Balinese-style guesthouses, offering "beach Olympics, tennis tournaments, sailing, snorkeling and kite-surfing," and, of course, the Bali Leha spa. It's a popular destination for the weddings of the well-to-do. A year ago, one of Google's two founders was married there, with the bride and groom reportedly planning to windsurf away after the reception. The celebrity guests filled up all the nearby resorts and kept a lot of the regular visitors away from Virgin Gorda. All that December, I heard complaints about how everything for the Google wedding had been brought in special so that few dollars entered the local economy. The locals were none too pleased—the 3,000 or so permanent residents of Virgin Gorda are reliant on tourism—though they were happy to relate that a late storm blew in and brought rough seas and rain to the celebration. The guests who were supposed to be ferried direct from their hotels had to be taken by car over Virgin Gorda's peak to the larger ferries at Gun Creek, so at least the taxi drivers got some business.

DARREN GYGI

I thought of Branson's reinvention as environmentalist (from music mogul, airline proprietor, space tourism magnate, and reality TV star) as I climbed back into the boat and stared at the hand-crocheted hammocks and rows of Hobie cats lining Necker's shore. I had been taken there by a wonderfully good-natured man named Quinto, who runs snorkeling trips throughout the North Sound and the attending islands. He takes people out a couple of times a day in high season and never seems to tire of it, getting swept up in each group's enthusiasm for these waters. I've been out with him at different times over a few years, and he settles his destinations based on the tides and the recent weather—avoiding places where sand has been kicked up by the northern swells or where the surf is heavy. It's an adventure every time. As he was running us out that day, he suddenly veered to starboard and pointed out an Eagle Spotted Ray. The vast black shape skimming just under the transparent water was an awe-inspiring sight. You could make out the motion of its wings. Quinto told us that they leap out of the water at times as they swim. One of the other folks on the boat asked him how he had spotted it. He laughed: "Lots of practice, man. Lots of practice."

Quinto was born and lives in the village that overlooks the North Sound, and I've rarely met a man more in sync with his environment. Proud as he is of it, he worries over the fragile underwater world—one easily undone by increased human presence—as much as he does over the ebb and flow of tourism. I asked Quinto what he thought about Branson. He'd already joked about the rental costs of Necker and Branson's purchase of Mosquito—"'cause everybody needs a second island." As he looked over at Necker with its beautiful Balinese style buildings and villa, he said, "You know he's gone green. He's a nut for all things green." He then pointed toward the end of the beach, "Look, he's even painted his satellite dish green and his water pipes, too. Yup, he's big on the environment now."

Robert Messenger

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Conservative Successes

We've stopped counting the number of times we've been told over the past few years that conservatives can't govern. Everywhere you turn, someone is saying that a conservative government is naturally incompetent and naturally corrupt. The idea that conservatives are ideologically incapable of running things is entrenched in liberal doctrine. It's a bedrock article of their faith.

Now it's true that the Bush administration has seen its share of incompetence, negligence, and cupidity. And back when Republicans ran Capitol Hill, it sometimes seemed as though GOP congressmen were competing for the annual Jack Abramoff Award for Excellence in Corruption. But linking these foibles to conservatism is silly. Liberalism is not immune from human nature, either, as the scandal surrounding Democratic Illinois governor Rod "F—ing" Blagojevich makes clear.

The fact is that conservatives govern successfully when they have the right mix of policy and personnel. In 2007 President Bush replaced the generals in charge of the Iraq war and shifted strategy there from force protection to population security. The "surge," led by Generals David Petraeus and Raymond Odierno, resulted in a breathtaking change in Iraq. The United States now stands a real chance of seeing its goals there realized. This did not happen overnight. It did not happen by magic. It happened because the president abandoned a policy that was failing in favor of one that might—and did—succeed.

On the home front, for a quarter century conservative policies have been instrumental in fighting inflation and spurring economic growth through lower taxes and free trade. In the 1990s, conservatives promoted successful welfare reform. In this decade, they supported legislation that increased standards and accountability for schools (and we've seen a modest increase in test scores since the law passed). They adopted a plan to add prescription drug coverage to Medicare that has come in under budget, has introduced competition into the system, and enjoys widespread support among seniors.

Not all conservatives supported these reforms. And maybe, in the long run, those who did not will turn out to have been right. Maybe the most innovative aspects of these programs will be repealed. Maybe the programs themselves will prove unsustainable or irrevocably flawed. Nonetheless, right now, both No Child Left Behind and Medicare Part D remain serious, good-faith efforts by conservatives to confront the major governing challenges of the day in a manner consistent with our principles.

That's not all. Just off the top of our heads, we can think of three more domestic policy areas where conservatives have made inroads.

Recently the Office of National Drug Control Policy, led by John Walters, released statistics—collected by the University of Michigan and Quest Diagnostics—that ought to brighten anyone's day. Walters's office calculates that there are 900,000 fewer young drug users than there were in 2001. Overall, teen drug use has declined 25 percent in the same period. And the number of people at the workplace who test positive for cocaine is at a record low.

In 2002, President Bush named Philip Mangano executive director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. Mangano has spent the last six years pointing out that the way to reduce homelessness is to give people homes. Experts call this the "housing first" strategy. It works. The most recent data show that the number of chronically homeless declined by 30 percent between 2005 and 2007. It's not an exaggeration to say that President Bush may have done more for the homeless than any of his predecessors.

Meanwhile, serious violent crime levels have declined precipitously since 1993, when municipalities across the country began to adopt conservative, tough-on-crime policies. The decline in crime has been most drastic in New York City, which by 2002 had the same crime rate as Provo, Utah. And it was a conservative, Rudy Giuliani, who transformed New York from a barely functioning drug bazaar into the safest large city in America.

Yes, a lot of these policies have bipartisan support. But that was not always the case. In each instance, the measures favored by conservatives came under attack from academics and liberal interest groups. Those groups argued that such problems couldn't be tackled. They said the conservative approach would only make things worse. They were wrong.

The bottom line is that conservatives have a domestic policy record to be proud of. There have been some mistakes and a bunch of missed opportunities. But, when conservatives think hard about how to confront social pathology, they tend to come up with some pretty good solutions. They may not make the headlines. They may be overshadowed by larger failures. But that's because no problem is ever fully solved, and governing a bustling democracy of more than 300 million people is extremely difficult—as the Democrats are about to find out.

—Matthew Continetti, for the Editors

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Inherit the What?

The Kennedy legacy isn't what it used to be.

BY NOEMIE EMERY

DAVE MALAN

Seventy-six years ago, in 1932, Joseph P. Kennedy Sr. gave a timely endorsement to Franklin D. Roosevelt, and, as a reward, was appointed chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission (and later ambassador to the Court of St. James), from which perch he launched the political careers of his sons. In 2008, his granddaughter Caroline gave a timely endorsement to Barack Obama, and now that he's elevated his rival Hillary Clinton from her Senate seat to his cabinet, Caroline is claiming that seat for herself in an effort to revive and extend her family's political presence, which in light of the age and illness of Uncle Ted seems to be fading away.

A prime difference is that Grandfather Kennedy was amply qualified for the SEC post and endorsed Roosevelt on his own behalf, while Caroline's sole qualification for being a senator is her being a Kennedy, and she endorsed Obama less in her own right than in her dead father's name. She seemed to endorse him in fact on behalf of her father, much as her father had once been endorsed by Franklin Roosevelt Jr., who campaigned in effect as *his* father's stand-in, giving the impression to voters in West Virginia and elsewhere that FDR had endorsed JFK from beyond the grave.

The problem is not only that she has nothing but the family legacy to stand on but that the "legacy" itself has been so diluted and changed. So many Kennedys have done and stood for so many things—with every admirable trait checked by a reprehensible one—that the family brand now means nothing and everything, and the key things that once made it distinctive have long since been thrown away.

From Joe Sr. on down to his sons and their children, the Kennedys have been many things to most men. Morally, they have been profiles in courage and cowardice: They fled Luftwaffe bombs in Blitz-ridden London, and in wartime sought out the most dangerous missions; they have saved shipmates from drowning in dangerous waters, and left a woman to drown in a scandalous accident; they have given the last full measure of devotion in war and its aftermath; and in peace and in new generations, they have sometimes asked for much more than their due. In politics, they have been far right, far left, and dead center; they have been male chauvinists and quivering slaves to the feminist movement; they have been isolationists, interventionists, and democratic crusaders; they have been Churchillian and Chamberlainesque. Joe was an isolationist and a right-winger; Ted an isolationist and a left-winger; Jack and Bobby were centrists and interventionists, though in contrasting ways. The rational Jack was a centrist on just about everything, while the visceral Bobby was a mélange of both left and right instincts; a friend in his time to César Chávez and Senator Joseph McCarthy; a man who attacked Lyndon B. Johnson and his Great Society from the left, right, and center, and in his last years sounded like Ronald

Noemie Emery, a Weekly Standard *contributing editor, is the author of* Great Expectations: The Troubled Lives of Political Families.

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Reagan and a student protester on alternating days.

The ironic fact is that while Joe bought Jack his seat in the House in his first election (with help from Jack's maternal grandfather, a one-time mayor of Boston), the Kennedy brand was built on the talents of Jack and of Bobby, whose centrist convictions the latter-day Kennedys have gone to some pains to repudiate. Jack, it is known now, governed slightly to the right of Richard M. Nixon, while his heirs have been to the left of McGovern, who (along with his running-mate, a Kennedy in-law) lost 49 states to Nixon in 1972.

This has created between the legacy and those who claim to uphold it a disconnect, which voters sense and act on even if the legatees seem to deny its existence. At the start of the Cold War, John Kennedy urged rearmament, and ran to the right of his Republican rivals, while Ted Kennedy strenuously fought against all the arms systems with which the Cold War was finally won. Bobby Kennedy was famous for his loathing of Fidel Castro, a left-wing Latin American dictator who used his country as a base for America's enemies, while Bobby's sons suck up to Hugo Chávez, the Castro-lite left-wing Venezuelan dictator, who makes common cause with America's enemies, including Iran.

A number of Bobby's children, in particular, have seemed to go in for left-wing fringe causes, backed by the kind of boutique liberals Bobby once thought of as "sick." This is the reason the attempts of the younger Kennedys to tap into the emotional charge of the legacy have fallen with such a dull thud: the reason that despite lavish send-offs, no Kennedy of the third generation has achieved lift-off beyond local office; the reason that Ted Kennedy, adored in his state and by the base of his party, has always been a hard sell outside them, and was humiliated by the despised Jimmy Carter—and by his own party members—in the 1980 campaign.

The Kennedys, however, seem oblivious to these contradictions, a fact shown in Caroline's choice of her cousin Kerry to serve as spokesman and surrogate, even though Kerry's public service credentials are even weaker than Caroline's, and her main claim to public attention was as a tabloid heroine in a spectacular divorce in 2003 from Andrew Cuomo, Caroline's rival in dynasticism. Caroline meanwhile is trying to run on the legacy of her father and Bobby, while embracing a post-60s Teddy-type platform strikingly out of step with that of her father and late uncle.

Would Jack, who threatened preemptive war over missiles in Cuba, have really opposed a war with Iraq after Saddam defied U.N. resolutions? Would Bobby, who made his chops busting corrupt labor unions, have supported the end of the secret ballot in union elections? What would Jack and Bobby have said to the feminist social agenda, up to and including late-term abortion? And what would Bobby have said of gay marriage?

If Caroline wants to run as a legatee, she should explain which Kennedy legacy she supports, and why she supports it (including the tax cuts put in by her father.) She could start by reading her father's inaugural and seeing if there are any parts she believes in. Would she "bear any burden and pay any price" to ensure the survival of liberty? If she wouldn't, she should tell us why. ♦

Not All Stimuli Are Created Equal

The best plan is a cut in the payroll tax.

BY LAWRENCE B. LINDSEY

When it comes to fighting recessions, there's a tendency to see "fiscal stimulus" packages as wasteful, as a form of "throwing money at the problem." The critics have a point. But the conclusion that therefore we should do nothing is also wrong. Instead, careful attention should be paid to the details. Just as a family pinched for cash might find borrowing for the purchase of a new car or appliance prudent while taking a vacation in Las Vegas wouldn't be, some government programs to combat recession make sense while others do not.

Three criteria are crucial for evaluating fiscal stimulus packages. First, does the program target the weakness in the economy that caused the recession, or is it largely peripheral? Second, are the funds going to be spent in a timely fashion? Third, does the program fundamentally strengthen the economy going forward into the expansion phase? A look at the economy's current circumstances suggests that a large fiscal stimulus is needed, but a badly designed one will, in the words of an old song, merely leave America "another day older and deeper in debt."

The cause of the current recession is buried in the balance sheet of the private economy, particularly the financial sector and the household sector. The government and the Federal Reserve have begun a number of programs to fix the balance sheet of the financial sector, some more effective than others.

Lawrence B. Lindsey is a former governor of the Federal Reserve. His most recent book is What a President Should Know . . . but Most Learn Too Late.

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The main challenge facing the new administration and Congress is how to handle the inevitable efforts of Americans to fight the effects of the financial crisis by saving. It would be foolish to stop this adjustment with government policy both because any efforts to do so would fail and because the restoration of a healthier household balance sheet is essential to the long-term recovery of the economy. Instead, the government must focus on how to ameliorate the effects that the resulting reduction in household spending will have on the economy.

The household saving rate is likely to rise by roughly 7 percentage points, from roughly one-half of one percent of disposable income to between 7 and 8 percent. The majority of this adjustment is likely to occur well before the end of 2009, with some further modest increase thereafter. Our estimate suggests a drop in consumer demand of roughly $500 billion in 2009 and a further drop of roughly half that figure in 2010. These frame the quantitative parameters for an appropriate fiscal stimulus.

The bulk of government spending programs that have been suggested involve transfers of federal resources to state and local governments. While any or all of these programs might qualify as meritorious in their own right, they collectively fail the tests of well targeted stimulus.

Note first that such spending programs do not directly address the household balance sheet problem. The history of such programs overwhelmingly suggests that states and localities will simply substitute federal funds for their own resources for the vast bulk of the money spent. As such, little net impact will be had on household balance sheets.

These programs also generally fail the test of timeliness. Consider the phrase "shovel ready" being used to describe many of these programs. By definition a shovel-ready project is one that state or local government has already spent a good deal of money developing and is likely to continue spending on. On the other hand, infrastructure projects that actually will produce net new spending are never shovel-ready. Most of the spending will end up occurring at the peak of the business cycle when it is not needed, not at the bottom.

By contrast, there are some ongoing federal spending programs that can be quickly ramped up during a recession. Most notable is defense procurement. There is wide agreement that we have run down our defense infrastructure substantially. Much of this can be remedied by simply increasing the pace of existing production programs. Think of it as "assembly line-ready" instead of shovel-ready. Defense spending also gets around the problem of federal dollars supplanting other spending, as only the federal government is involved.

The third test involves whether projects assist the economy in entering the expansion phase. In general, government spending programs divert resources from the private sector as it tries to expand. Some infrastructure projects genuinely assist the private sector by making it more efficient. One such project now being discussed is the creation of a national energy grid. This has been tried before, but failed to get through the legal roadblocks thrown in its path by environmental groups and private landowners. Thus, a project may be highly desirable, but not timely. It may be a good idea, but it is not stimulus.

The question to ask about any infrastructure project being sold as "stimulus" is why the project hasn't been done already. The most common answer is that the state and local political process didn't find that the benefits met the costs—a sure sign that the project is not likely to pay for itself during the expansion phase of the business cycle. Another test of the genuineness of the stimulus intent is whether the federal political process is willing to let go of its own political interests in an effort to maximize the stimulus effect. For example, will Congress waive the Davis-Bacon requirements that drive up costs and reduce the job creating benefits of infrastructure spending? Will they abandon earmarks?

The final argument made for federal funding of infrastructure spending by states is that it is needed to prevent or offset cuts that states will have to make in a weak economy. This argument essentially concedes the points made above, that such spending is really just a safety net for the public sector. It is at best job preserving, not job creating.

Permanent tax cuts offer a much better option. The incoming chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, Christina Romer, has estimated that the macroeconomic benefits of tax cuts can be two to three times larger than common estimates of the benefits related to spending increases. The relative advantage of tax cuts over spending is even clearer when the recession is centered on the household balance sheet. Some relatively minor changes, like making the current 15 percent tax rate on dividends and capital gains permanent, would not only help household cash flow, but also put a floor under equity prices much as their introduction did in 2003. This would help protect against further wealth destruction and balance sheet deterioration.

But the centerpiece of any tax cut should be employment taxes: in particular, a permanent halving of the current 12.4 percent Social Security payroll tax on the first $106,800 of wages, split evenly between workers and employers. The direct revenue effect of that would be a bit under $400 billion per year, roughly in line with the present quantitative needs of the economy. It also meets our three tests of effective stimulus.

First, the funds would flow directly to households through higher take-home pay and indirectly through a reduction in the cost of employment. Economic studies conclude that the benefits of a reduction in the employer portion of the payroll tax are ultimately received by employ-

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ees. But the immediate effect would be an improvement in the cash flow of credit-starved businesses (as well as being a marginal incentive to keep employment up).

Second, the funds would be extremely timely, with the benefits hitting the economy with the first paycheck after the plan was implemented.

Third, by lowering the taxation of labor, the plan would help produce a higher-employment recovery than would otherwise be the case.

Since the tax cut should be permanent to have maximum effect, the biggest challenge would be how to make up for the lost revenue once the macroeconomic need for fiscal stimulus had passed. In the short run, effective fiscal stimulus requires that government revenue drop, thereby enriching the private sector, and with the Treasury making the Social Security trust fund whole by way of intergovernmental bookkeeping. Longer term, however, spending cuts or a new source of revenue would be needed.

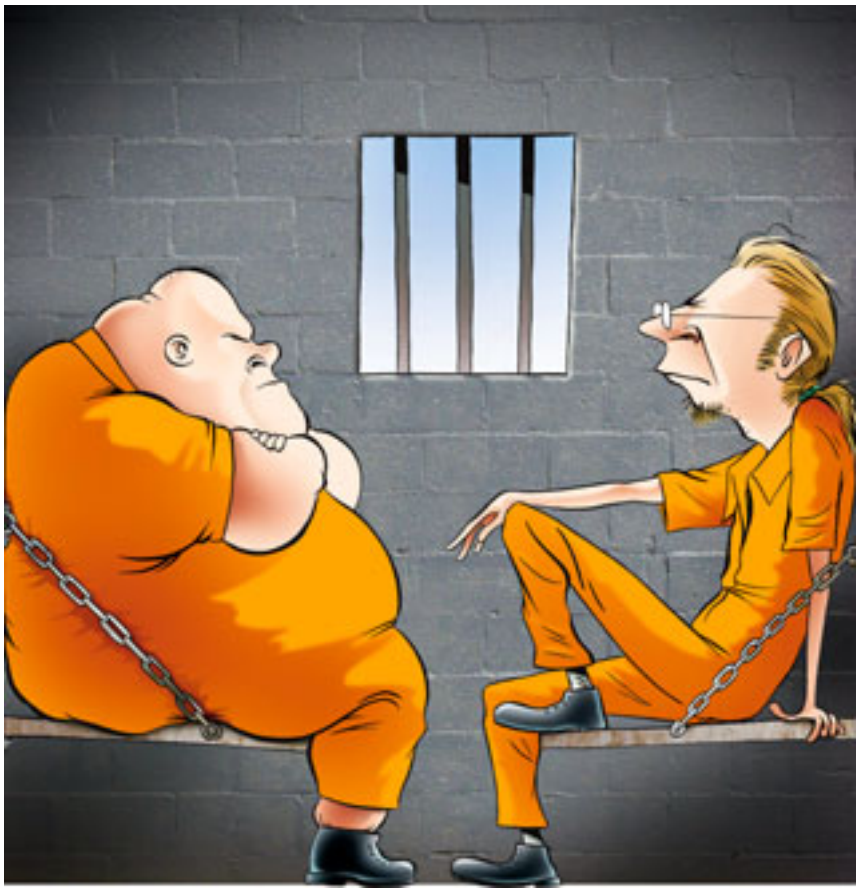
Given the agenda of the incoming administration, the best source of such funds would be a greenhouse emissions tax. It would be a much more efficient way of achieving the desired environmental objectives of the administration than any of the regulatory or "cap and trade" ideas now being considered. Such programs have failed in Europe since they are so easily gamed. Unlike regulations or cap and trade, moreover, an emissions tax can be phased in and calibrated as macroeconomic conditions permitted, specifically as the unemployment rate declined.

The country would be getting the stimulus it needed in the short run. In the long run it would enjoy a permanent improvement in its tax system, with higher taxes on things it wants to discourage (pollution and oil imports) and lower taxes on things it wants to encourage, specifically employment. A greener America with higher employment is a lot better than simply being another day older and deeper in debt. ♦

The Politics of Fat

A hefty problem for the left.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON



CHRIS MORRIS

On December 15, the city council of Binghamton, New York—every member a proud progressive—unanimously passed an ordinance making it a crime to discriminate against fat people. The next day, David Paterson, the famously progressive governor of New York, proposed a special "fat tax" on soda pop because soda pop makes people fat.

When it comes to obesity, the authorities in New York have put their citizens on notice: We will get you coming and going.

Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Supporters make clear that each move is only preliminary to even greater reforms. Several legislators are interested in a statewide "weight-based" discrimination law, and fat taxes on other foods may prove irresistible.

Obesity is very today, very *right now*. Obesity is the new smoking. "What smoking was to my parents' generation," Paterson says, "obesity is to my children's generation." He means this in two ways. One is that kids today—these kids today!—eat fatty foods with as much ardor as their grandparents smoked tobacco. The other is that government intends to eradicate the first vice with the

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same ruthlessness as it did the second. And it's not an idle threat. The campaign against smoking was progressivism's greatest recent success. Over a span of 20 years, an ancient human weakness once enjoyed by nearly half the population and quietly tolerated by the other half became virtually outlawed.

The anti-smoking campaign shows how to turn a private vice requiring tolerance and indulgence into a public offense demanding regulation and official censure. Paterson is following the campaign step by step. First comes the misappropriation of the language of epidemiology. The terms are liberated from their scientific meaning and then attached to a widely shared activity or condition. The condition, in this case obesity, is renamed a "disease," suggesting that some kind of contagion is making the rounds. Then the disease inflates into an "epidemic," suggesting an urgency that only the foolhardy would ignore. "We find ourselves," says Paterson, "in the midst of a new public health epidemic, childhood obesity." Any libertarian qualms are quickly overridden, since not even the most hollow-eyed anarcho-capitalist would deny that government is obliged to guard against runaway disease.

To intensify the urgency, Paterson deploys neutral statistics from sources that are already on his side. The statistics are always improbably exact. Unnamed public health researchers at Harvard have discovered that obesity is "associated" with 112,000 deaths in the United States every year; not 113,000, and not 111,000. Each can of soda pop "increases the risk" of making a child fat by 60 percent. Not 59 percent. Not 61 percent. An increase of $1.25 in tobacco taxes saves more than 37,000 lives and $5 billion in health care costs. And Paterson's 18 percent tax on sugary soft drinks will reduce consumption by 5 percent. Not four.

From here the rest of the argument tumbles like dominoes, clack clack clack. Fat people are not merely drawn to eating unhealthy food; they are "addicted." As addicts, they are rendered helpless by their addiction. Helpless, they deserve the status of victims. Like all victims, they must be victimized by something. By unhealthy food? No: Not food merely, for food and commercial marketing combine to create the TFE—the "Toxic Food Environment." The TFE is everywhere in today's America; it *is* today's America. It emanates from the seductive advertising of food, from the media's quasi-pornographic obsession with food, from the scandalously low price of food, from the ubiquitous sale of food in such unlikely places as gas-station minimarts. (In simpler times, Americans got gas when they ate food; now they eat food when they get gas.) Created by cynical corporations, the TFE is the ghastly miasma in which we live and move and have our being, swelling with every Frito.

Thus a private failing becomes a public menace.

This is the point in the argument where the city council of Binghamton jumps in. Actually, they perked up at the mention of the word "victims." Victims are citizens who have gone limp. They require the paternal care and protection of public officials. Researchers from Yale (no less) "found that obese adults were 37 times more likely"—not 36 times more likely, and not 38 either—"to report weight-based employment discrimination compared to 'normal' weight adults." Nonprogressives from places other than Binghamton might find this statistic less than eye-popping. Who else but fat people are going to suffer discrimination against fat people? But the very idea of such unregulated bigotry moved the city council to act. Specifically, it outlawed what has elsewhere been called weightism: "weight-based" discrimination in housing, employment, education, and public accommodation. The bill's sponsor explained the law by saying, "It is the human thing to do."

Well, it's certainly the progressive thing to do. Those same Yale researchers fleshed out the reasoning, if you'll forgive the expression. "Weight bias exists," they explained, because weightist bigots believe that "the only reason people fail to lose weight is because of [they're not teaching grammar at Yale these days] poor self-discipline or a lack of willpower." This wrongheaded notion "blames the victim rather than addressing environmental conditions that cause obesity."

The city council takes care of the first part of this incorrect thinking. Its new law reinforces the view that obesity, like sex or race, is an unchangeable condition deserving civil rights protection. The governor aims for the second part, by making the initial move toward taxing those "environmental conditions" out of existence; he will, in other words, directly attack the TFE and, if all goes well, cure the obesity epidemic.

The governor and the Binghamton city council acted independently, of course, but together they've concocted a perfectly progressive two-pronged approach, a one-two punch, a regulatory pincer movement designed to eliminate, all at once and simultaneously, not only discrimination against the obese but also the obese themselves.

One problem does suggest itself. If the government is to declare our hefty brothers and sisters a protected class, if they are to become a legal caste that cannot be singled out because of their weight, how can the government continue to go after their favorite foods? A "fat tax" on sugary soda pop punishes fat people by making the foods they love more expensive—merely because fat people love them. One tactic violates the other. It's only a matter of time before fat people will be able to sue the state of New York on grounds of discrimination for imposing a fat tax. And then where will we be?

I don't want to give anybody any ideas, but I have noticed an alarming number of dangerously skinny people drinking diet soda. It's like an epidemic. ♦

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Don't Know Much About Economics

Obama's blind spot.

BY FRED BARNES

Barack Obama is an awfully good politician but not much of an economist. His model for lifting America out of its economic slump is President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. The trouble with FDR's policy, however, is that it didn't come close to reviving the economy and restoring it to pre-Depression vigor. But FDR did use the New Deal quite successfully in another regard: to build a coalition that kept Democrats in the majority for a half century.

Obama's plan for invigorating the economy, as he describes it, consists almost entirely of government spending "to spur demand and create new jobs." His aim is to generate 2.5 million jobs, funded by a $750 billion to $1 trillion "stimulus" package. He favors tax cuts for the middle class and tax rebates for the tens of millions who pay no federal income tax.

Those tax cuts aren't designed to promote investment. If Obama also wants tax incentives for private investment, he's kept that a secret. But there's no reason to think he does. He rarely mentions the private sector. And investment incentives would involve tax cuts for the wealthy, a no-no in the ideology of liberal Democrats like Obama.

As president-elect, Obama has talked frequently about the economy but practically never in the language of free markets. Incentives? He's mentioned "incentives for fuel-efficient cars" and "economic incentives that would be helpful" to Iran to improve relations, but not for capital investment. "Across-the-board tax cuts" or "corporate tax cuts" or "tax cuts to increase investment"? Those phrases haven't crossed Obama's lips.

The contrast here—and not only in language—is with President Reagan's economic stimulus in 1981. To generate investment, Reagan relied on a 25 percent, across-the-board tax cut on individual income—including the income of the rich—and accelerated depreciation for business. It worked, aided by monetary easing by the Federal Reserve. By early 1983, both the economy and employment were growing rapidly.

The difference between Reagan's and Obama's policies is striking. Reagan stressed *private* investment. With Obama, as with FDR, it's *public* investment. Reagan cut spending in the worst days of the recession in 1981. Obama favors radically increased spending. Reagan sought to boost employment in general. Obama has particular jobs in mind.

What kind of jobs? "We get an immediate jumpstart to the economy and jobs that are immediately being created on things like a smart [electrical] grid or working to make our buildings more energy efficient," Obama said last week. "We've got shovel-ready projects all across the country that governors and mayors are pleading to fund. And the minute we can get those investments to the state level, jobs are going to be created."

That's not all. Obama has an obsession with public financing of "green" jobs. "We can create millions of jobs, starting with a 21st century economic recovery plan that puts Americans to work building wind farms, solar panels, and fuel-efficient cars," he said. "We can spark the dynamism of our economy" by investing in "renewable energy that will give life to new businesses and industries with good jobs that pay well and can't be outsourced." The "we" is the Obama administration, not the public.

Obama has his own yardstick for gauging how the economy is doing. And it includes neither economic growth nor a rising stock market. "My answer is simple: jobs and wages," he said.

In the short run, Obama's recovery plan should increase the number of jobs and increase wages—on government-funded projects anyway. So he may be able to claim at least temporary success. Producing a new era of economic growth is another matter. Rea-

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gan achieved it. If he sticks to the New Deal model, Obama is unlikely to.

Assuming his plan is enacted, Obama will surely satisfy the policy desires of liberal interest groups, organized labor especially. Labor relishes infrastructure jobs with high wages. The environmental lobby will be thrilled by the creation of green jobs. Governors and mayors, predominantly Democrats, will jump for joy at Obama's plan to include a bailout for them.

That Obama has no interest in the Reagan recovery model is hardly a surprise. He has some unusual ideas about the economy. "The American economy has worked in large part," he said last week, "because we've guided the market's invisible hand with a higher principle: that America prospers when all Americans can prosper." That's not exactly the way Adam Smith described the invisible hand of free markets.

When he announced his picks for top energy and environmental posts, Obama praised California for adopting the most stringent emission standards in the country. "And rather than it being an impediment to economic growth, it has helped to become an engine of economic growth," he observed. At best, it hasn't helped much and more likely has hurt the California economy, which is currently cratering.

Obama is famous for his eccentric view of taxing capital gains. In a Democratic primary debate last April, Obama said he would consider raising the tax rate on capital gains "for purposes of fairness." And he quibbled with the fact that tax revenues from capital gains have risen when the tax rate was lowered and fallen when it was increased. "Well," Obama said, "that might happen or it might not."

For now, Obama has hinted he won't raise taxes, though he vigorously defends his proposal to terminate the Bush tax cuts for individuals earning more than $250,000 a year. Instead, he may allow those cuts to expire in 2011. Now or later, raising taxes on the well-to-do is what the FDR model calls for. ♦

Elites, and Those Who Love Them

A debate that won't go away.

BY SAM SCHULMAN

Debutants at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, 1944

GETTY IMAGES

We may sooner than you think look back at 2008 and need to be reminded that this was the year when the stock market crashed, the banks reeled, the streets of Athens ran with blood, Obama captured the White House and invited the Clintons back in, the GOP collapsed, and Chris Buckley and David Frum left *National Review*. Instead, we will remember 2008 as the year of the great Lionel Trilling revival.

It's not just that Trilling's essays have been republished in two new handsome paperback editions, each introduced by an intellectual poohbah at opposite ends of the LaGuardia-Reagan shuttle: Louis Menand of the *New Yorker* and Leon Wieseltier of the *New Republic*. It's that a particular set of Trillingesque ideas have seized the imaginations of our best and brightest. Trilling thought that Americans have been shy about examining questions of status, of manners, and of elitism. "Americans will not deny that we have classes and snobbery," he wrote, "but they seem to hold it to be indelicate to take precise cognizance of these phenomena. Consider that Henry James is, among a large part of our reading public, still held to be at fault for noticing society as much as he did."

If you look around, you will hear America singing a Trillingesque defense of elitism. You will notice many Republicans joining this chorus: deploring the verbal attacks on elitism and elites—in journalism, entertainment, and the right and left

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coasts in general—committed by conservative personalities in the media and by the now-forgotten young person who ran for the vice-presidency last year.

The rumblings began before the election, but erupted in earnest soon after. On November 5, David Frum wrote a notorious column in the *National Post* in which he demanded a reinvented Republican party. He imagined a GOP that could win the hearts and minds of the elite—or as he described it, the votes of college graduates and Connecticut residents—because such a party would stand up for the social issues and American values that Bachelors of Arts and Nutmeggers hold dear on abortion, the environment, and keeping religion for Sundays.

Last month, Toby Young, who has made himself famous and rich because Graydon Carter fired him from *Vanity Fair*, wrote a rare serious article: in *Prospect* upon the 50th anniversary of his father, Michael Young's famous intellectual satire, "The Rise of the Meritocracy." Young pondered a mystery he sees taking place in Britain. The old class system—and more, the elaborate set of manners that was native to the upper class, while setting the tone for all the others—has disappeared. "As a student in the mid-80s, I was proud to call myself an 'Oxbridge Gooner'—one of several dozen students at Oxford and Cambridge who regularly attended Arsenal games." It was rare then, but common now. "The rich and the poor no longer live in two nations, at least not socially. . . . Mass culture is for everyone, not just the masses." Strong words from a man who, in his intellectual days, founded a journal subtitled "Low Culture for Highbrows."

And last week, Melik Kaylan, writing in *Forbes*, deplored how conservatives in America have associated themselves with opposition to elite values.

> Suddenly, the orators of the right have taken up the 1970s leftist obsession with overthrowing "elites." Certainly, it's true enough that 30 years on, those leftists have become the elites, in academe, in art, in Hollywood and many parts of the media. But advocating class war, even intellectual class war, is hardly a sound conservative policy.

Conservatives, he thinks, are no longer intellectual like Bill Buckley, but his opposite.

> When did conservatism become a lowbrow pursuit? Traditional values created the greatest churches, paintings of the Renaissance, country houses, book collections and a love of learning. As it stands, these days, the conservative masses mostly consume entertainment, and culture is considered elitist. This is nonsense. We need an aesthetics of conservatism.

What can we make of this? First of all, I must say, in keeping with my theme, that not only are Messrs. Frum, Young, and Kaylan admirable writers who enjoy no little status among a select readership, but each one of them is a friend. The David Frums bequeathed their jewel of a childminder to the Sam Schulmans when they left New York for Washington. Melik Kaylan and Toby Young were my *confreres* at "Taki's Top Drawer" in its first incarnation as a section in the once-great *New York Press*. In those innocent days, "Top Drawer" expressed a confident irony regarding the social elite, to which our owner Taki both belonged and energetically undermined. But what has turned David, Melik, and Toby into defenders, not mockers of the elite—and me into a namedropper?

It might be the consequences of defeat. Politics, like theater, is a heartbreaking pursuit. To see your ideas misrepresented and shunned, your comrades in tatters, is to some a personal affront. At such a moment, to proclaim that you were rejected because you pretended to be something you are not is comforting. For my distinguished friends, it may be a temptation to decide that it was not their ideas that were rejected, but the shabby populists who were the incompetent champions of those ideas—talk show hosts, TV scolds, counter-jumpers from faraway states of which we know very little. But what they have still to learn is that a change of party brings only a change in personnel among the elite—not a move up or down the scale. There was a story that I heard about the 1964 election in Britain that swept the Tories from power. At last, they said in certain Oxford common rooms, we won't have a cabinet full of all those bloody men from—well, it would be snobbish to mention the name of the Oxford college (of which my friend Leon Wieseltier and I are both members). But when Wilson named the members of the new Labour cabinet, it contained just as many members of the college as the Tory cabinet had done.

Such is the way of the world. But Toby Young, despite his sophistication, is shocked that the proportion of graduates from elite public schools in the learned professions has remained the same in the last 50 years. He forgets that idealistic politicians in the Labour party (to which his father devoted his great talents) systematically destroyed the free grammar schools that offered the brightest children of the masses an equivalent education. As a result, only those children who have attended the British equivalents of Punahou School, Lab School, and Sidwell Friends have the opportunities which children from ordinary families—like Margaret Thatcher and Edward Heath—once enjoyed.

Speaking of schools, I hope that my neo-elitist friends notice that Richard Just in the *New Republic* is responding to their unilateral disarmament by taking up the anti-elitist weapons they have abandoned. To Just, the notion of appointing Caroline Kennedy to Hillary Clinton's Senate seat is social elitism reminiscent of the worst excesses of the Republican party: "along comes the ultimate symbol of social elitism to stake her claim to a powerful place in the Democratic Party."

The irony here is wonderful—but I think that Caroline is hugely qualified to be senator. Have I told you about the super job she did chairing the search committee to find a new headmistress for my daughters' school in Manhattan? ♦

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Inconsequential Joe

A return to the typical vice-presidency.

BY PHILIP TERZIAN

One of the conventions of modern presidential transitions is the ritual exaltation of vice presidents-to-be. The incoming vice president, it is announced, will have unprecedented responsibilities in the new administration. His desk will be located just inches from the Oval Office; he will be first among equals in the councils of state; he will dine with the commander in chief on a regular basis; his special province will be trade, or defense, or the mission to Neptune.

Whether this is because newly elected presidents really think their running mates are a national resource, or such rhetorical gestures are simple political courtesy, it is difficult to say. Almost invariably, however, such declarations are less than true. There have been genuinely powerful vice presidents—the incumbent, Dick Cheney; and George H.W. Bush was far from insignificant—but such exceptions prove the rule.

Joseph Biden, the 66-year-old six-term senator from Delaware, who is nothing if not a quintessential politician of his time, is destined to be more typical than not. We know this for two reasons. First, because the Obama apparatus has not even bothered to say that Joe Biden will have unprecedented responsibilities during the next four years. And second, because the only significant story to emerge about Biden since the election has been the fact—duly reported in the press—that the Bidens beat the Obamas in their quest to acquire a puppy. (For the record, Biden's new dog is a German shepherd.)

In fact, it may be fair to assume that Biden will be the least consequential vice president since Alben Barkley, the amiable 71-year-old Senate fixture from Kentucky, known popularly as the "Veep," who was so underwhelmed by his four years' service in the Truman administration that he subsequently got himself elected to the Senate again.

It is difficult to imagine either Hillary Clinton or General James Jones actively soliciting Joe Biden's judgment in foreign affairs, or Timothy Geithner and Lawrence Summers consulting Biden on the economy. Similarly, if the neophyte Obama seeks advice on politics or policy, is Biden destined to be the one to set him straight, or whip the troops into line, or populate the White House and executive branch with Biden people? Will Rahm Emanuel be expected to "clear it" with Joe?

To ask such questions is to answer them—even without laughing. Indeed, if there were any doubt about the insignificance of Joseph Biden in Barack Obama's administration, it was answered with last week's announcement that Biden would chair a special, cabinet-level task force to assess the conditions of American middle- and working-class families. ("Is the number of these families growing?" asks the vice president-elect. "Are they prospering?") This is close to pure Democratic boilerplate. It might have been more entertaining to put Biden in charge of a White House council on change we can believe in, or appoint him to be the logorrhea czar, but no less humiliating.

This is not to say, of course, that Biden will disappear into his hideaway office on Capitol Hill, like Barkley, and fuel his afternoons with bourbon and branch water. Obama has been reasonably scrupulous about including Biden in public announcements and photo ops. But it will be noted that the next vice president has tended to serve as announcer and master of ceremonies at these events—a sort of Ed McMahon to Obama's Johnny Carson—instead of a member of the incoming squad. No journalist has detected the hand of Biden in personnel selections, or seriously suggested that factions in the Obama administration will naturally gravitate toward Biden's orbit.

'Twas ever thus. The modern vice presidency has been populated, in Washington terms, by many estimable men—Richard Nixon, Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, Gerald Ford, Nelson Rockefeller, Walter Mondale, George H.W. Bush, Dan Quayle, Al Gore, Dick Cheney—but the contents of the chalice are considerably watered down. In some instances (Nixon, Bush) the office was, with some complications, a convenient stepping stone; in others (Humphrey, Gore), proximity to power had tragic political consequences. For LBJ and Ford, the vice presidency was a stroke of ill-disguised luck. For Rockefeller, it was a bittersweet climax to a monumental career. Mondale and Quayle were probably promoted to where they belonged.

Still, it is by any measure an ambiguous position: more than the "bucket of warm piss" described by John Nance Garner, less than its constitutional status suggests. In Dick Cheney's case, his power has derived from the consent of George W. Bush—not a good omen for Barack Obama's deputy—so Biden might have to console himself with comforting thoughts.

"A president lives in the spotlight," a vice president once declared. "But a vice president lives in the flickering strobe lights that alternately illuminate or shadow his unwritten duties. It is sometimes uncomfortable. It is sometimes ego-diminishing. But it is also quietly rewarding."

Spiro Agnew might well have believed those words when he spoke them at the 1972 Republican convention, but they are as meaningless today as they were then. ♦

Philip Terzian is literary editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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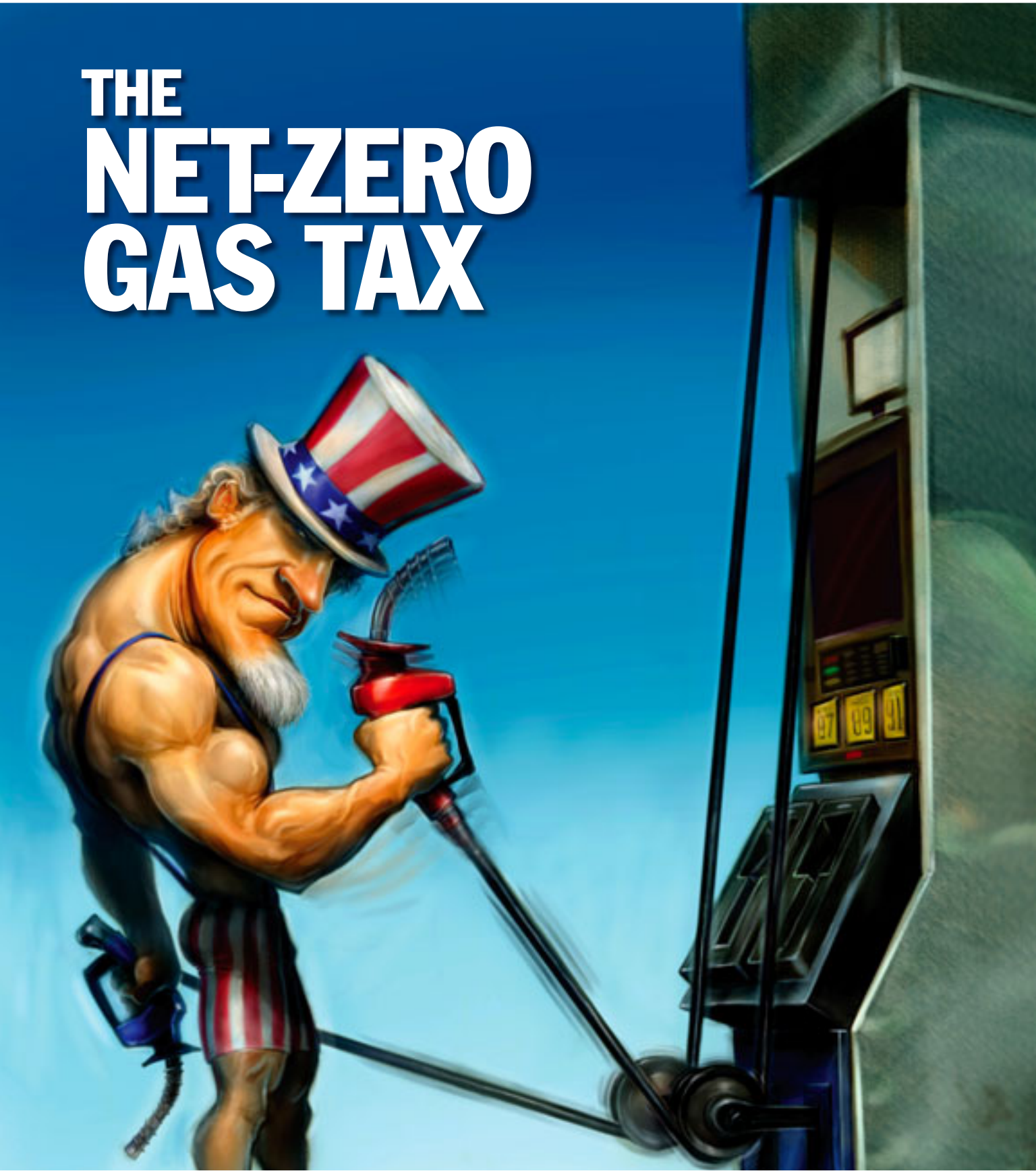
THE NET-ZERO GAS TAX



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A once-in-a-generation way to weaken OPEC, abolish absurd regulations, reduce greenhouse gases, improve our trade balance, gain significant energy independence, spur conservation—and humble Russia, Venezuela, and Iran.

BY CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

Americans have a deep and understandable aversion to gasoline taxes. In a culture more single-mindedly devoted to individual freedom than any other, tampering with access to the open road is met with visceral opposition. That's why earnest efforts to alter American driving habits take the form of regulation of the auto *companies*—the better to hide the hand of government and protect politicians from the inevitable popular backlash.

But it's not just love of the car. America is a nation of continental expanses. Distances between population centers can be vast. The mass-transit mini-car culture of Europe just doesn't work in big sky country.

This combination of geography and romance is the principal reason gas taxes are so astonishingly low in America. The federal tax is 18.4 cents per gallon. In Britain, as in much of Europe, the tax approaches $4 per gallon—more than 20 times the federal levy here.

Savvy politicians (i.e., those who succeed in getting themselves elected president) know this and tread carefully. Ronald Reagan managed a 5-cent increase. So did Bush 41. Bill Clinton needed a big fight to get a 4.3-cent increase. The lesson has been widely learned. No one with national ambitions proposes a major gas tax. Indeed, this summer featured the absurd spectacle of two leading presidential candidates (John McCain and Hillary Clinton) seriously proposing a temporary gas tax *suspension*.

Today's economic climate of financial instability and deepening recession, moreover, makes the piling on of new taxes—gasoline or otherwise—not just politically unpalatable but economically dubious in the extreme.

So why even think about it? Because the virtues of a gas tax remain what they have always been. A tax that suppresses U.S. gas consumption can have a major effect on reducing world oil prices. And the benefits of low world oil prices are obvious: They put tremendous pressure on OPEC, as evidenced by its disarray during the current collapse; they deal serious economic damage to energy-exporting geopolitical adversaries such as Russia, Venezuela, and Iran; and they reduce the enormous U.S. imbalance of oil trade which last year alone diverted a quarter of $1 trillion abroad. Furthermore, a reduction in U.S. demand alters the balance of power between producer and consumer, making us less dependent on oil exporters. It begins weaning us off foreign oil, and, if combined with nuclear power and renewed U.S. oil and gas drilling, puts us on the road to energy independence.

High gas prices, whether achieved by market forces or by government imposition, encourage fuel economy. In the short term, they simply reduce the amount of driving. In the longer term, they lead to the increased (voluntary) shift to more fuel-efficient cars. They render redundant and unnecessary the absurd CAFE standards—the ever-changing Corporate Average Fuel Economy regulations that mandate the fuel efficiency of various car and truck fleets—which introduce terrible distortions into the market. As the consumer market adjusts itself to more fuel-efficient autos, the green car culture of the future that environmentalists are attempting to impose by decree begins to shape itself unmandated. This shift has the collateral environmental effect of reducing pollution and CO_2 emissions, an important benefit for those who believe in man-made global warming and a painless bonus for agnostics (like me) who nonetheless believe that the endless pumping of CO_2 into the atmosphere cannot be a good thing.

These benefits are blindingly obvious. They always have been. But the only time you can possibly think of imposing a tax to achieve them is when oil prices are very low. We had such an opportunity when prices collapsed in

GARY LOCKE

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the mid-1980s and again in the late 1990s. Both opportunities were squandered. Nothing was done.

Today we are experiencing a unique moment. Oil prices are in a historic free fall from a peak of $147 a barrel to $39 today. In July, U.S. gasoline was selling for $4.11 a gallon. It now sells for $1.65. With $4 gas still fresh in our memories, the psychological impact of a tax that boosts the pump price to near $3 would be far less than at any point in decades. Indeed, an immediate $1 tax would still leave the price more than one-third below its July peak.

The rub, of course, is that this price drop is happening at a time of severe recession. Not only would the cash-strapped consumer rebel against a gas tax. The economic pitfalls would be enormous. At a time when overall consumer demand is shrinking, any tax would further drain the economy of disposable income, decreasing purchasing power just when consumer spending needs to be supported.

What to do? Something radically new. A net-zero gas tax. Not a freestanding gas tax but a swap that couples the tax with an equal payroll tax reduction. A two-part solution that yields the government no net increase in revenue and, more importantly—that is why this proposal is different from others—immediately renders the average gasoline consumer financially whole.

Here is how it works. The simultaneous enactment of two measures: A $1 increase in the federal gasoline tax—together with an immediate $14 a week reduction of the FICA tax. Indeed, that reduction in payroll tax should go into effect the preceding week, so that the upside of the swap (the cash from the payroll tax rebate) is in hand even before the downside (the tax) kicks in.

The math is simple. The average American buys roughly 14 gallons of gasoline a week. The $1 gas tax takes $14 out of his pocket. The reduction in payroll tax puts it right back. The average driver comes out even, and the government makes nothing on the transaction. (There are, of course, more drivers than workers—203 million vs. 163 million. The 10 million unemployed would receive the extra $14 in their unemployment insurance checks. And the elderly who drive—there are 30 million licensed drivers over 65—would receive it with their Social Security payments.)

Revenue neutrality is essential. No money is taken out of the economy. Washington doesn't get fatter. Nor does it get leaner. It is simply a transfer agent moving money from one activity (gasoline purchasing) to another (employment) with zero net revenue for the government.

Revenue neutrality for the consumer is perhaps even more important. Unlike the stand-alone gas tax, it does not drain his wallet, which would produce not only insuperable popular resistance but also a new drag on purchasing power in the midst of a severe recession. Unlike other tax rebate plans, moreover, the consumer doesn't have to wait for a lump-sum reimbursement at tax time next April, after having seethed for a year about government robbing him every time he fills up. The reimbursement is immediate. Indeed, at its inception, the reimbursement *precedes* the tax expenditure.

One nice detail is that the $14 rebate is mildly progressive. The lower wage earner gets a slightly greater percentage of his payroll tax reduced than does the higher earner. But that's a side effect. The main point is that the federal government is left with no net revenue—even temporarily. And the average worker is left with no net loss. (As the tax takes effect and demand is suppressed, average gas consumption will begin to fall below 14 gallons a week. There would need to be a review, say yearly, to adjust the payroll tax rebate to maintain revenue neutrality. For example, at 13 gallons purchased per week, the rebate would be reduced to $13.)

Of course, as with any simple proposal, there are complications. Doesn't reimbursement-by-payroll-tax-cut just cancel out the incentive to drive less and shift to fuel-efficient cars? No. The $14 in cash can be spent on anything. You can blow it all on gas by driving your usual number of miles, or you can drive a bit less and actually have money in your pocket for something else. There's no particular reason why the individual consumer would want to plow it all back into a commodity that is now $1 more expensive. When something becomes more expensive, less of it is bought.

The idea that the demand for gasoline is inelastic is a myth. A 2007 study done at the University of California, Davis, shows that during the oil shocks of the late 1970s, a 20 percent increase in oil prices produced a 6 percent drop in per capita gas consumption. During the first half of this decade, demand proved more resistant to change—until the dramatic increases of the last two years. Between November 2007 and October 2008, the United States experienced the largest continual decline in driving history (100 billion miles). Last August, shortly after pump prices peaked at $4.11 per gallon, the year-on-year decrease in driving reached 5.6 percent—the largest ever year-to-year decline recorded in a single month, reported the Department of Transportation. (Records go back to 1942.) At the same time, mass transit—buses, subways, and light rail—has seen record increases in ridership. Amtrak reported more riders and revenue in fiscal 2008 than ever in its 37-year history.

Gasoline demand can be stubbornly inelastic, but

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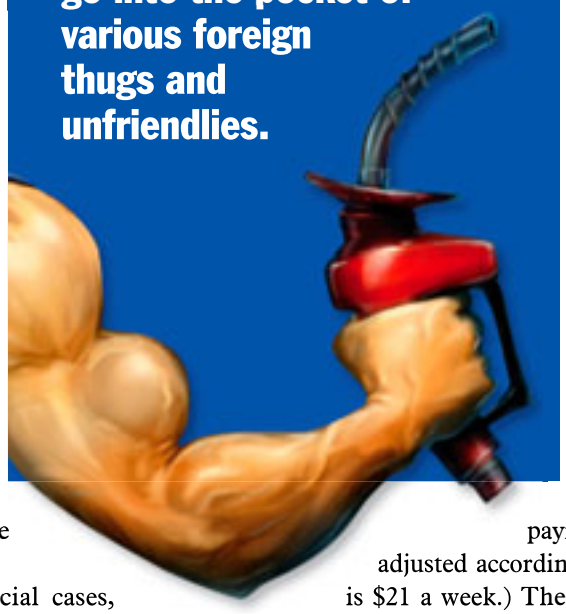
only up to a point. In this last run-up, the point of free fall appeared to be around $4. If it turns out that at the current world price of $39 a barrel, a $1 tax does not discourage demand enough to keep the price down, we simply increase the tax. The beauty of the gas tax is that we—and not OPEC—do the adjusting. And that increase in price doesn't go into the pocket of various foreign thugs and unfriendlies, but back into the pocket of the American consumer.

What about special cases? Of course there are variations in how much people drive. It depends on geography, occupation, and a host of other factors. These variations are unavoidable, and in part, welcome. The whole idea is to reward those who drive less and to disadvantage those who drive more. Indeed, inequities of this sort are always introduced when, for overarching national reasons, government creates incentives and disincentives for certain behaviors. A tax credit for college tuition essentially takes money out of the non-college going population to subsidize those who do go—and will likely be wealthier in the end than their non-college contributors. Not very fair. Nonetheless, we support such incentives because college education is a national good that we wish to encourage. Decreased oil consumption is a similarly desirable national good.

The beauty of a gas tax is that we—and not OPEC—do the adjusting. And the increase in price doesn't go into the pocket of various foreign thugs and unfriendlies.



There will certainly be special cases, such as truck drivers and others for whom longer distance driving is a necessity that might warrant some special program of relief. That would require some small bureaucracy, some filings for exemption or rebate, and perhaps even some very minor tweak of the gas tax (say, an extra penny or two beyond the dollar). But that's a detail. Most people can drive less. They already do.

Why a $1 tax? Because we need a significant increase in the cost of gasoline to change our habits—or, more accurately, maintain the new driving habits and auto purchase patterns that have already occurred as a result of the recent oil shock. We know from the history of the 1980s and 1990s that these habits will be undone and unlearned if gasoline remains at today's amazingly low price. In the very short time that prices have been this low, we have already seen a slight rebound in SUV sales. They remain far below the level of last year—in part because no one is buying anything in this recession, and in part because we have not fully recovered from the psychological impact of $4 gasoline. We are not quite ready to believe that gas will remain this low. But if it does remain this low, as the night follows day, we will resume our gas-guzzling habits.

It might therefore be objected that a $1 gasoline tax won't be enough. If $4 was the price point that precipitated a major decrease in driving and a collapse of SUV sales, an immediate imposition of a $1 gas tax would only bring the average price to $2.65.

To which I have two answers. First, my preliminary assumption is that it takes $4 to break the habit of gas-guzzling profligacy. But once that is done, it might take something less, only in the range of $3, to maintain the new habit. It may turn out that these guesses are slightly off. The virtue of a gas tax is that these conjectures can be empirically tested and refined, and the precise amount of the tax adjusted to consumer response.

Second, my personal preference would be a $1.25 tax today (at $1.65 gasoline) or even a $1.50 tax if gas prices begin to slide below $1.50—the target being near-$3 gasoline. (The payroll tax rebate would, of course, be adjusted accordingly: If the tax is $1.50, the rebate is $21 a week.) The $1 proposal is offered because it seems more politically palatable. My personal preference for a higher initial tax stems from my assumption that the more sharply and quickly the higher prices are imposed, the greater and more lasting the effect on consumption.

But whatever one's assumptions and choice of initial tax, the net-zero tax swap remains flexible, adjustable, testable, and nonbureaucratic. Behavior is changed, driving is curtailed, fuel efficiency is increased, without any of the arbitrary, shifting, often mindless mandates decreed by Congress.

This is a major benefit of the gas tax that is generally overlooked. It is not just an alternative to regulation;

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because it is so much more efficient, it is a killer of regulation. The most egregious of these regulations are the fleet fuel efficiency (CAFE) standards forced on auto companies. Rather than creating market conditions that encourage people to voluntarily buy greener cars, the CAFE standards simply impose them. And once the regulations are written—with their arbitrary miles-per-gallon numbers and target dates—they are not easily changed. If they are changed, moreover, they cause massive dislocation, and yet more inefficiency, in the auto industry.

CAFE standards have proven devastating to Detroit. When oil prices were relatively low, they forced U.S. auto companies to produce small cars that they could only sell at a loss. They were essentially making unsellable cars to fulfill mandated quotas, like steel producers in socialist countries meeting five-year plan production targets with equal disregard for demand.

Yet the great 2008 run-up in world oil prices showed what happens without any government coercion. As the price of gas approached $4 a gallon, there was a collapse of big-car sales that caused U.S. manufacturers to begin cutting SUV production and restructuring the composition of their fleets. GM's CEO, for example, declared in June, "these prices are changing consumer behavior and changing it rapidly," and announced the closing of four SUV plants and the addition of a third shift in two plants making smaller cars.

Which is precisely why a gas tax would render these government-dictated regulations irrelevant and obsolete. If you want to shift to fuel-efficient cars, don't mandate, don't scold, don't appeal to the better angels of our nature. Find the price point, reach it with a tax, and let the market do the rest.

Yes, a high gas tax constitutes a very serious government intervention. But it has the virtue of simplicity. It is clean, adaptable, and easy to administer. Admittedly, it takes a massive external force to alter behavior and tastes. But given the national security and the economic need for more fuel efficiency, and given the leverage that environmental considerations will have on the incoming Democratic administration and Democratic Congress, *that change in behavior and taste will occur one way or the other*. Better a gas tax that activates free market mechanisms rather than regulation that causes cascading market distortions.

The net-zero gas tax not only obviates the need for government regulation. It obviates the need for government spending as well. Expensive gas creates the market for the fuel-efficient car without Washington having to pick winners and losers with massive government "investment" and arbitrary grants. No regulations, no mandates, no spending programs to prop up the production of green cars that consumer demand would not otherwise support. And if we find this transition going too quickly or too slowly, we can alter it with the simple expedient of altering the gas tax, rather than undertaking the enormously complicated review and rewriting of fuel-efficiency regulations.

Then there are the so-called externalities: national security, balance of payments, and the environment. The most important of these is national security. In July, when gasoline was at $4, a full $3 was going to the oil producer. (On average thus far this year, 70 percent of pump prices went to pay for the crude.) And God in his infinite wisdom has put oil in many unfortunate places. The American people understand that these dollars were going out of the U.S. economy and into the treasuries of Hugo Chávez, Vladimir Putin, the Iranian mullahs (indirectly, since the oil is fungible), and various other miscreants.

The point of a high U.S. gas tax is to suppress domestic demand and thus suppress the world price. Low world prices are a huge blow to overseas producers, particularly ones with relatively large populations, nationalized industries that are increasingly inefficient, and budgetary obligations built on the expectation of a continuing energy bonanza. Countries such as Russia, Venezuela, and Iran.

A UBS analysis estimates that Iran and Venezuela need $90 oil to balance their budgets. And at $70, according to Russian finance minister Alexei Kudrin, Russia goes into deficit. It is now draining the reserves built up during the fat years. At current oil prices, Russia will soon become a debtor nation. The World Bank's lead economist for Russia, Zeljko Bogetic, said on December 19 that at $30 a barrel, "financing constraint would become so sharp that it's possible even to envisage Russia's return from a creditor to international organizations to [that of] a borrower." This will be a far humbler Russia than the one that invaded Georgia, built a nuclear reactor in Iran, threatens Poland and the Czech Republic, and is reestablishing naval bases in such former Soviet satellites as Syria.

The Russian navy just made calls in Nicaragua and Cuba. It has conducted joint exercises with Venezuela in an open challenge to America. These are, as yet, not serious threats. But with a stronger Russia and Venezuela, they could be. The projection of power is very expensive, as Americans very well know. Oil at $39 would simply starve Russia and Venezuela of the means to sustain this adventurism.

Similarly Iran, which is already under sanctions, already suffering high inflation, already the subject of popular discontent over corruption and economic mismanagement. All this was cushioned by high oil prices. They allowed the Islamic republic to act like the regional superpower, giving military and financial support to Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza, "special groups" and Sadrist militias

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in Iraq, and various other terrorists. And, of course, oil revenues permit the continued large-scale operation of Iran's nuclear weapons development program.

Of all the instruments of foreign policy, military and diplomatic, that we have at our disposal against these adversaries, none is as powerful as $39 (or less) oil. It makes power projection by these regimes far more expensive and difficult. And even more profoundly, if world oil prices remain this low for a significant period of time, the very stability of the regimes in Russia, Venezuela, and Iran will be jeopardized—increasing the possibility of regime change without the expenditure of a single U.S. defense dollar and without the risk of a single U.S. soldier.

Not all oil exporters are adversaries. But many are indifferent to the economic repercussions of high world prices on the American consumer and the American economy. Three of the last four global recessions were preceded—and significantly precipitated—by major oil price spikes. Suppressing the world price through the help of a high U.S. gas tax weakens these producers and makes far more problematic their periodic attempt to extort yet more revenue from us by means of cartel-wide production cuts. Combined with reduction of our overall oil importation, that significantly reduces our dependence on—and our helplessness in the face of—their production decisions. It reduces the power of OPEC over oil prices, and thus over our economic life. And it constitutes the beginning of energy independence—particularly if coupled with increased production of various kinds at home. (But that's another subject.)

We underestimate our power. Of course, the slump in China and other rapidly growing economies has contributed to the current extreme price collapse. But China consumes only 9 percent of the world's oil. The United States consumes 24 percent. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia produces 13 percent of the world's oil. We don't generally see ourselves as the Saudi Arabia of oil consumers, but we are. The Saudis have the most effect on the world price because they are the swing producer. We are, in effect, the swing consumer. And since oil peaked earlier this year, we are consuming less. October was yet another month of record year-on-year decline of gasoline consumption in the United States. And that's just the immediate effect, before the long-term impact of changes in our automobile fleet can take hold. And that long-term change will only occur if we keep the domestic price high.

The further advantage of keeping it artificially high by means of a tax is that it keeps a large part of the money paid at the pump at home in the U.S. economy. Last year, we sent $246 billion to foreign countries to pay for oil. With oil fetching a price today more than 70 percent below its peak, billions that just this summer were going overseas are now getting pumped back into the U.S. economy. This does not just look pretty on our trade balance sheet. It helps protect the dollar by reducing the number of dollars that would otherwise be held abroad, often by countries whose attitude towards America is ambivalent, if not hostile.

And finally there is the environmental effect. If anthropogenic global warming is real, a reduction in driving and increase in fuel-efficiency is an unvarnished good. If anthropogenic global warming is as yet unproved, as I happen to believe, then the reduction in CO_2 pumped into the atmosphere is a reasonable bet in conditions of uncertainty.

Prudence would suggest taking modest steps. Politics makes such steps imperative. Whatever the scientific truth, climate change has become dogma in the West. In the schools, it is already a religion. Public policy is shaped not by scientific reality but by public perceptions. The environmental movement not only has hegemony in the media. Its political party is now in control of the U.S. executive and the legislature. They will see to it that actions are taken to reduce greenhouse gases.

We therefore have a choice. These measures can either be radical and economically ruinous, such as renewed moratoria on oil and gas drilling, the effective abolition of the coal industry, forced production of green cars that have no market and are so economically unviable that they will ruin the companies that make them. (The Chevy Volt will go 40 miles on a charge and cost about $35,000 *after* a required $7,500 government rebate. A real winner.) Or we can do it sensibly. Curtail oil consumption and encourage fuel-efficient technologies by means of a net-zero gas tax. It would reduce pollution and CO_2 emissions at no economic cost. If we can do environmentally sensible things, particularly ones that will have overwhelming economic and national security advantages, why not pocket the environmental gains, and obviate the need for more extreme alternatives?

I am not a car hater. It is a wondrous source of connectedness, convenience, and individual freedom. But it has its social costs, its externalities. If we can control these fairly painlessly by keeping the price of gas relatively high—though lower than what it was just a few months ago—we can gain this subsidiary benefit of prophylactic environmental action. Again, without mandates, without massive bureaucracies, and with a host of collateral benefits.

In our current economic crisis, there is but a single silver lining—the collapse of world oil prices. This in turn is already stimulating a struggling economy, helping our balance of payments, humbling OPEC, and weakening our adversaries. When economic conditions improve, and oil consumption and prices rise again, these benefits will evaporate precisely as they have time and again since the first oil shock of 1973. A time of $1.65 gasoline is our chance to enact a net-zero gas tax. It is a once in a generation opportunity that we cannot afford to miss. ♦

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Sulu island on the approach to Jolo City.

Treading Softly in the Philippines

Why a low-intensity counterinsurgency strategy seems to be working there.

By Max Boot & Richard Bennet

Zamboanga City, Philippines

The war on terror that the Obama administration is inheriting comes with a decidedly mixed record. Stopping attacks on the American homeland since 2001 has been the Bush administration's biggest accomplishment. Turning around the war effort in Iraq, which was on the verge of failure in 2006, has been another signal success. But, as the Mumbai attacks remind us, the threat of Islamist terrorism has hardly been extinguished. Al Qaeda and other extremists have found in Pakistan the haven they lost in Afghanistan after 2001. Since then they have waged an insurgency, with growing success, against governments in both Kabul and Islamabad. Meanwhile, Iran continues to be an active sponsor of terrorism as well as a seeker of nuclear weapons. Its proxies may have been routed in Iraq, but they remain as powerful as ever in Lebanon, and their tentacles spread as far as South America.

Almost forgotten amid these major developments is a tiny success story in Southeast Asia that may offer a more apt template than either Iraq or Afghanistan for fighting

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY MAX BOOT

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extremists in many corners of the world. The southern islands of the Philippines, inhabited by Muslims known as Moros (Spanish for "Moor"), have been in almost perpetual rebellion against the Christian majority ruling in Manila. They fought the Spaniards when they arrived 500 years ago, and they fought the Americans when they arrived more than 100 years ago. The latest rebellion broke out in the early 1970s and has killed well over 120,000 people. It was led initially by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which challenged a martial-law regime of dictator Ferdinand Marcos. That group began to reach accommodation with Manila in 1975—a process completed by a democratic government in 1996. The MNLF demobilized its fighters, and most of its members melted back into the populace. Some even took positions in the local government or the security forces. But along the way several dangerous splinter factions broke off.

The largest and most moderate of these is the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which, as the name would indicate, has a more religious emphasis than its socialist-nationalist forerunner. It, too, has been in negotiations with the government, but the peace process broke down in August after the Philippine Supreme Court, much to the consternation of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, ruled unconstitutional a plan to grant the Muslim region a large degree of autonomy. (Judicial activism, it seems, is one of many American exports that have taken root here.) While most of the MILF, 8,000-10,000 strong, remained at peace, several of its "base commands," numbering a few thousand fighters, declared war on the Philippine government and the non-Muslim inhabitants of the island of Mindanao, burning Christian villages and slaughtering their inhabitants. An estimated 200 people were killed, and tens of thousands turned into refugees.

The Medcap in the village of Patikul on Sulu Island

The more extremist of these base commands have established a symbiotic relationship with Jemaah Islamiyah, the Indonesian terrorist group that carried out the infamous bombing in Bali that killed over 200 people in 2002, and Abu Sayyaf, a homegrown Filipino jihadist group launched by veterans of the 1980s war against the Soviets in Afghanistan. Those groups, in turn, developed close ties in the 1990s with al Qaeda. Muhammad Jamal Khalifa, Osama bin Laden's brother-in-law, moved to Manila to provide financing and organizational assistance to local radicals. Training camps were set up in the poorly policed hinterland in the Muslim south, and ambitious plots were hatched. These included plans to blow up 11 airliners in midair, crash a hijacked airliner into the CIA's headquarters, and assassinate Pope John Paul II while he was visiting the Philippines in 1995. Among the chief plotters present in the Philippines were Ramzi Yousef, coordinator of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, and his uncle, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who would go on to mastermind the September 11, 2001, attacks.

The attacks on New York and Washington finally awakened the U.S. government to the need to do something about the Philippine branch of the global jihad. Military exercises were conducted with the Philippines, and Special Forces and CIA teams were dispatched to provide training and intelligence support for local security forces. An early, largely successful example of Philippine-American cooperation came in the search for an Abu Sayyaf squad that in 2001 abducted 20 people, including three Americans, from a beach resort in the southern Philippines. Eventually the kidnappers were hunted down and captured or killed, although two of the Americans died as well—one executed by the kidnappers, the other killed in a bungled rescue attempt by the Philippine Army.

Since then, the United States has set up a Joint Special Operations Task Force to direct Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines. We recently spent a couple of weeks meeting and traveling with task force members to get an overview of their operations. With only 600 or so personnel, the task force operates throughout the sprawling southern Philippines—a region known to earlier generations of American soldiers as Moroland. There are only 5 million Muslims in the entire Philippine population of 90 million; 80 percent of Filipinos are Roman Catholics, making this the only Christian country in Asia. The Philippines has a smaller Muslim minority than France, but it is overwhelmingly concentrated in a few places. The largest island in the Muslim region is Mindanao, with a pop-

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'For three decades we were using a strategy of force. It turned out to be a vicious cycle. We would have body count syndrome. Commanders would become popular because they were warrior-like. But I saw the more we destroyed, the more the number of the enemy increased.'

—Major General Juancho Sabban

ulation of 18 million, 30 percent of them Muslims. (The percentage was considerably higher a century ago, back when young Captain Jack Pershing was fighting Moro rebels, but in the 20th century the Philippine government resettled millions of Christians from other islands here.) There is also a string of smaller, heavily Muslim islands in the Sulu archipelago stretching through azure-blue waters to the borders of Malaysia and Indonesia.

A patient being treated by a Philippine dentist at the Patikul Medcap

What all these areas share, in addition to their Muslim populations, is inaccessible terrain, with lots of triple-canopy jungles, treacherous swamps, and soaring mountains that provide ideal hideouts for outlaws. The surrounding waters are plied by countless small boats that operate with little scrutiny from the Philippines' tiny navy, which has only 62 patrol boats to cover thousands of miles of coastline. Smuggling terrorist operatives, arms, and drugs in and out is all too easy.

The rebels have another advantage. They can tap into a widespread sense of alienation among some of the Philippines' poorest inhabitants. Before we traveled south in a tiny C-12 passenger aircraft, officials at the stately U.S. embassy in Manila told us that in the Philippines as a whole life expectancy is over 70 years, but in Mindanao it's only 52 years. Nominal GDP per capita in the entire country is $1,600; in Mindanao it's less than $700. More than 55 percent of families in the Muslim region are living below the poverty line, double the share nationwide.

We could see the difference for ourselves. Manila has its slums, but it also has soaring skyscrapers and gleaming malls that would look right at home in Dubai or Singapore. In Mindanao's second-largest city, Zamboanga, by contrast, there is not a high-rise in sight. Instead there are lots of tin-roofed shacks that serve as mom-and-pop stores and living quarters, often at the same time. In the countryside, even that seems luxurious. Here you enter a world of thatched-roof huts, often without windows, electricity, or indoor plumbing. Many Muslims blame their lack of economic development on discrimination and lack of sympathy on the part of the overwhelmingly Catholic authorities in faraway Manila. The more radical among them think that Muslims should rule as far north as the national capital, as they did before the Spaniards arrived in 1521. It is little wonder that jihadist propaganda, spread by Saudi-funded mosques, literature, and charities, has found a receptive audience among people with such a long history of grievance (even if the easy-going Filipinos, like most tropical peoples, are hardly the most receptive audience for the fundamentalist dictates of an austere Wahhabism born in the deserts of Arabia).

To counter the influence of religious fanaticism, Colonel Bill Coultrup directs a multifaceted counterinsurgency from the Joint Special Operations Task Force's headquarters in a small, sealed compound on Camp Navarro, a Philippine military base nestled next ato Zamboanga airport. A self-effacing man with a ready smile and a puckish sense of humor, Coultrup is not one to boast of his achievements, but he spent more than a decade with one of the military's legendary counterterrorism units. During that time he scored some notable successes that are much-discussed in

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military circles but remain classified. In the Philippines, he has had to master a very different way of war. In sharp contrast to Iraq, where American commandos have had virtual free rein to kill and capture "high value targets," here they are forbidden by the Philippine government from engaging in any direct combat operations. Their role is to bolster the Philippine armed forces; their oft-repeated mantra is "through, by, and with." That sometimes rankles some of these seasoned special operators. The leader of one Special Forces A-Team told us, "If I had the ability to do here what I did in Iraq last year, this fight would have been over in two days."

But that isn't an option because of Filipino nationalist sensitivities, and in the best Special Forces tradition Coultrup and his troops have made the necessary adjustments from a "Direct Action" mission to one of "Foreign Internal Defense." Their weapons include bounties for information leading to the capture of wanted terrorists as part of the U.S. "Rewards for Justice" program; training, support, and intelligence-sharing for the Philippine armed forces; and a combination of "information operations" and "civil affairs operations" to wean the populace away from the insurgents. "The goal," Coultrup says, "is to set conditions for good governance, and you do that by removing the safe havens of these terrorist groups and addressing the specific conditions that contribute to those safe havens."

We were briefed on each aspect of the task force's operations while spending time in and around the cities of Zamboanga and Cotabato on Mindanao and Jolo on Sulu island—all areas that host substantial Special Operations detachments, mainly Army Green Berets and Navy SEALs, backed by support forces from all the services.

An important component of their work is providing "information operations support" to the Philippine armed forces. Psychological operations specialists showed us two initiatives designed to counter the terrorists' propaganda. One is a text messaging campaign (texting is the preferred medium of communication here) that encourages recipients to participate in peace-promotion programs and report information to Philippine authorities on terrorist activities. The other is a slickly produced comic book series aimed at 18-to-24-year-old males, the prime recruits for all extremist groups, featuring a Jack Bauer-style hero battling villainous terrorists. All of the products have to be translated into multiple languages because of the multiplicity of regional tongues spoken in these polyglot islands.

Even more than psy-ops, civil affairs is a prime "line of operations" for the U.S. forces. A U.S. Army captain, head of a four-man civil affairs team, drove us for hours around rural Mindanao to show us projects that he is funding, including a new high school in a remote region and a new building for an existing elementary school. He also showed off a huge pile of coconut lumber, bamboo, and corrugated tin—materials that will be used to rebuild 81 homes destroyed by rogue elements of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the fighting back in August. The goal, he explained, is "persistent engagement," creating projects that require him and his Filipino counterparts to make multiple visits to check on progress. Those visits engender trust with the locals and can lead them to provide vital intelligence on insurgents.

A school being built with U.S. funds in Pikit in central Mindanao

Such considerations were also very much on the mind of a Green Beret master sergeant a few days later while he was directing, alongside his Filipino partners, a "Medcap" (Medical Civil Action Project) in a small village on Sulu Island. Working with a Philippine Marine battalion, the Special Forces soldiers had set up a one-day clinic where residents could come in for free medical and dental treatment. Cartoons were provided to entertain kids, and free medicines were handed out to all. "It's important that they don't leave empty handed," said one Philippine soldier. "We treat those who need medical attention, and give vitamins and toothbrushes to those who don't. Everyone

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receives something." In return, all residents have to do is provide their names and dates of birth, which helps security forces build a better picture of the populace.

Such enterprises build goodwill with the locals and encourage them to chat freely with both Philippine and American soldiers. "I'm trying to determine their feelings toward us," the rail-thin master sergeant explained, while enthusiastic villagers swirled around him. "You can't ask directly. You have to probe around to find out if they want us here. If so, that means they're open to us, which will make it easy to push the bad guys out. But if they don't want us here after we've given them all this, that means they're heavily influenced by the bad guys, so we have our work cut out for us."

He added that the Abu Sayyaf Group, which has redoubts in nearby mountains, will try to do "negative information operations" to counter the Medcaps, telling residents they can't trust the Americans because they won't stick around. To stymie the insurgents, the master sergeant added, his A-Team will work with Filipino authorities to repaint a local school or undertake some other project. While there is nothing covert about the American role (the master sergeant is wearing his uniform), he and other Americans are careful to deflect most of the credit to their Philippine counterparts. "We want to show what the AFP [Armed Forces of the Philippines] have done for the people," the sergeant explained, "and we want the people to ask what has ASG [the Abu Sayyaf Group] ever done for us?"

A Special Forces captain meeting with Philippine counterparts, Colonel Marlou Salazar and Major Demy Zagala, near Datu Piang in central Mindanao.

The sergeant works for a larger Special Operations force on Sulu. Its commander, Major Joe Mouer, ticked off how many such civil affairs projects his troops have undertaken in cooperation with the Philippine Marines: They have completed 80 miles of road, 34 wells, 40 schools. At their headquarters in Jolo City, the American troops even host a weekly movie night for hundreds of local kids. We attended one such event, finding hordes of happy kids sitting on the floor of a large hall, watching an animated feature while munching free popcorn. Soldiers act as ushers, but they are dressed in civilian clothes and don't carry weapons so as to create a nonthreatening environment. To counter enemy propaganda that such events are used for Christian proselytizing, Mouer has invited a local Muslim cleric to give a blessing before the start of each movie.

The Joint Special Operations Task Force is hardly alone in trying to improve life for Philippine Muslims. The U.S. Agency for International Development is also active in Mindanao, with $130 million worth of projects planned over the next five years. Completed projects include retraining former Moro National Liberation Front fighters in farming skills and installing computer labs in hundreds of high schools. The U.S. Navy has contributed by having the hospital ship *Mercy* pay regular visits to the Philippines to treat tens of thousands of patients.

These examples might give the impression that Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines is solely a "hearts and minds" endeavor. While "nonkinetic" operations do constitute a large part of the mission, U.S. forces also help Filipino troops to capture and kill insurgents more efficiently. At a "team house" located on a Philippine military base in rural Mindanao, a Special Forces captain ran down for us all the training missions his 12-man A-Team has undertaken since arriving in the area in May. They have shared their knowledge of mortars, long-range marksmanship, and even digital cameras. Using an array of manned and unmanned aerial vehicles they have also provided real-time intelligence that has allowed Philippine forces to track and target elusive insurgents. Just as important, their world-class medics have provided critical care to Philippine soldiers who have been injured in battle. In some cases they have even arranged for "medevac" to distant hospitals. Knowing that they will be taken care of should they be wounded encourages Philippine soldiers to fight harder.

We found out how much Philippine troops appreciate such assistance when we went to visit the hilltop command post where Colonel Marlou Salazar, a Philippine brigade commander, briefed us on the progress of his operations against renegade Moro Islamic Liberation Front com-

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Abu Sayyaf's strength has fallen from more than 1,200 in 2002 to fewer than 500 today. Jemaah Islamiyah has fewer than 100 members left. The links between the Philippines and al Qaeda are largely cut.

manders. On one side of his map there is a piece of paper that states his objective: "Get Kato dead or alive." Ameril Umbra Kato is a Saudi-educated MILF commander who went on the warpath in August. Salazar has not achieved his goal yet, but he has managed to put Kato on the run and capture or kill many of his men with an effective offensive that received crucial support from the U.S. A-Team. "We boxed the area, maneuvered, and attacked," Salazar says proudly, pointing out where the battles occurred in the swampy valley below. He then shows off a hoard of captured weapons, including a mortar whose serial number indicates it was made in Pakistan.

At the request of the Philippine government, which wants to negotiate with it, the MILF has not formally been designated a terrorist organization by the U.S. Department of State, but some of its "lawless" elements are closely intertwined with Jemaah Islamiyah and Abu Sayyaf, providing these groups sanctuary in territory they control. U.S. forces are therefore allowed to support the Philippine military in their operations to reduce those safe havens. By contrast, U.S. troops are prohibited from helping the Filipinos battle another major insurgent group, the communist New People's Army, which sometimes cooperates with MILF but which is deemed by Washington of purely local interest—not part of the global war on terror.

Traditional "kinetic" operations in which bullets are fired and bombs dropped are still part of the Philippine strategy against their numerous guerrilla foes, but they have become less important over the years, thanks partly to the advice Philippine forces have received from the U.S. Special Forces. At the officers' club of the Philippine Marine headquarters in Manila, we sat down with Major General Juancho Sabban, a bullet-headed, brown-skinned, bull-necked Filipino who has spent much of the past 30 years battling various insurgent groups. Today he commands Task Force Comet, two marine brigades charged with pacifying Sulu island.

"For three decades we were using a strategy of force," he says. "It turned out to be a vicious cycle. We would have body count syndrome. Commanders would become popular because they were warrior-like. But I saw the more we destroyed, the more the number of the enemy increased. There were so many instances of collateral damage and innocent lives being sacrificed. Just by passing through fields with so many battalions we were already stomping on crops and that makes people resent the military. In the course of a firefight school buildings would get burned, houses would be razed to the ground, civilians caught in the crossfire. Everything was blamed on the military."

Now, General Sabban says, the Philippine armed forces and their American allies have "shifted strategy": "I have

A flag-raising at Camp Navarro, headquarters of Lieutenant General Nelson Allaga's Western Mindanao Command, outside of Zamboanga City.

told my commanders that all military operations should be intelligence-driven and surgical. How do we do this? Through intelligence enhanced by civil-military operations. We do civil-military operations to get people onto our side. More people on your side will produce more and better intelligence, and if you have better intelligence you'll have more successful operations that are precise and surgical and that don't hurt innocent civilians. Thus we will get more support from the people and you will be denying the enemy resources and space to operate. People will drive them from their own areas. So now their space is getting smaller and smaller, until we can pinpoint them with information coming from the people themselves."

Much of the available evidence supports General Sabban's belief that the new strategy has been successful. Abu

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Sayyaf hasn't managed a high-profile terrorist attack since Valentine's Day 2005, when it set off a series of bombs in Manila and Mindanao that killed 11 people and injured 93. Smaller attacks continue, but there has been nothing on the scale of the bombing that devastated the passenger ship *SuperFerry 14* in Manila Bay in 2004, killing 116 people. The group has splintered in recent years, with its remnants focusing increasingly on kidnapping-for-ransom, which is hardly different from ordinary criminal activity and signals the dire financial straits the group faces. Abu Sayyaf has also made common cause with marijuana and amphetamine producers who find shelter in guerrilla-controlled areas. Its estimated strength has fallen from more than 1,200 in 2002 to fewer than 500 today. Jemaah Islamiyah has fewer than 100 members left in the Philippines. The links between the Philippines and al Qaeda largely have been severed.

Of crucial importance, many of the top leaders of both Jemaah Islamiyah and Abu Sayyaf have been eliminated. Only nine or ten "high value targets" are still on the loose, but getting them has been a study in frustration. The rugged terrain allows the kingpins to slip away into the jungle before ground troops can reach them. And the Philippine armed forces are sorely restricted in their capacity for precision bombing. Several Philippine and American soldiers we spoke with expressed frustration that the Philippine armed forces lack armed Predator drones, AC-130 gunships, satellite-guided Joint Direct Attack Munitions, and other high-tech U.S. weapons that could more quickly finish off terrorist leaders. But the Philippine government isn't willing to pay for this fancy gear, and the U.S. government hasn't been willing to donate it. (Apparently some at the State Department fear that such weapons could be turned against the New People's Army, though why that should be a cause for concern is not clear, since the NPA is classified as a terrorist organization by the State Department.)

Even without this high-tech equipment, however, the counterinsurgency campaign has been enjoying impressive success. We could see it for ourselves as we drove around areas that had once been infested with insurgents. In central Mindanao, the roads we traveled were deemed so safe that neither we nor our military escorts wore body armor, and we moved in unarmored SUVs.

The question now being debated about the Philippines at U.S. Pacific Command is similar to the one being debated about Iraq at U.S. Central Command: When can we leave without jeopardizing the gains that have been made? In both cases, soldiers on the ground are saying "not yet." Colonel Coultrup points out that in 2002 U.S. troops supported the Philippine armed forces as they chased terrorists off Basilan Island, but then U.S. forces left and the Philippine forces drew down. This allowed the terrorists to stage a resurgence culminating in an attack in June 2007 in which 14 Philippine Marines were killed, 10 of them decapitated. In early December, another clash on Basilan killed 5 soldiers and injured 24. "I'm trying to work myself out of a job, but drawing down before conditions are stable creates a vacuum allowing Abu Sayyaf to return," Coultrup warns. He estimates that his operation is at the "70 percent to 75 percent level," but that more work needs to be done to eliminate the final insurgent lairs deep in the jungles and mountains. Lieutenant General Nelson Allaga, head of the Western Mindanao Command, confirms: "For now, we really need the Americans' support."

One of the beauties of this low-intensity approach is that it can be continued indefinitely without much public opposition or even notice. The reason why Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines gets so much less attention than the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan is not hard to see. In Iraq there are 140,000 troops. In Afghanistan 35,000. In the Philippines 600. The Iraq war costs over $100 billion a year, Afghanistan over $30 billion. The Philippines costs $52 *million* a year.

Even more important is the human cost. While thousands of Americans have been killed or maimed in Afghanistan and Iraq, in the Philippines only one American soldier has died as a result of enemy action—Special Forces Sergeant First Class Mark Jackson, who was killed in 2002 by a bomb in Zamboanga City. Three soldiers have been wounded in action, the most serious injuries being sustained by Captain Mike Hummel in the same bombing. Ten more soldiers died in 2002 in an accident when their MH-47 helicopter crashed. Every death is a tragedy, but with the number of tragedies in the Philippines minuscule, there is scant opposition to the mission either in the Philippines or in the United States. That's important, because when battling an insurgency the degree of success is often closely correlated to the duration of operations.

The successes of the Philippines cannot be replicated everywhere. To make this approach work requires having capable partners in the local security forces, which wasn't the case in either Iraq or Afghanistan immediately after the overthrow of the old regimes. It helps that the Filipino population is generally pro-American and thus receptive to the presence of some American troops. As Major General Salvatore Cambria, commander of U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Pacific, says, "This is *a* model, not *the* model." But this "soft and light" approach—a "soft" counterinsurgency strategy, a light American footprint—is a model that has obvious application to many countries around the world where we cannot or will not send large numbers of troops to stamp out affiliates of the global jihadist network. ♦

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Hitler in Munich, 1930

TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

One Historian's Quest

What were the Germans thinking?

BY STEVEN OZMENT

This rich collection from Ian Kershaw's previous works was chosen by Israeli scholars, his friends and critics, with his concurrence. It reprints 14 articles and essays written between 1981 and 2006, each addressing the title. The burning issue and unifying theme of the collection is the German people's bond, or lack thereof, with Hitler and the Holocaust, which since the end of World War II has been a topic of incessant and often hateful debate.

A dense, engrossing 25-page retrospective introduces the collection, revising and updating the author's views on these subjects, while fulfilling a secondary goal: to give the reader "a clearer glimpse of the historian behind the history." The result is a rewarding opportunity for readers to look over the shoulder of the English-speaking world's foremost authority on Adolf Hitler and National Socialism.

Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution
by Ian Kershaw
Yale, 400 pp., $35

Although Kershaw describes himself as "a historian of modern Germany, specifically of Nazism, and not directly of the Holocaust," he declares his "chief interest" in that history always to have been the Germans' step-by-step road to the Holocaust: "how the majority [of ordinary Germans] responded to the increasing persecution and extermination of the Jews."

Kershaw's is a surprising curriculum vitae. Not until 1969 did he begin to learn German and develop a professional interest in German history. As late as 1972 he was a trained and practicing scholar of medieval English social and economic history. He credits his "German turn" to a chance meeting with an old Nazi in that year who shocked him by saying straight out that "the Jew was a louse." In the years thereafter, no modern historian has done more to bring about an understanding of how the Germans, then Europe's seemingly brightest and best, succumbed so completely to dictatorship, a second world war, and the persecution and extermination of the Jews.

Kershaw's new career in German history took flight in 1976-77 when he

Steven Ozment, McLean professor of history at Harvard, is the author, most recently, of A Mighty Fortress: A New History of the German People.

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became a member of a Munich research team devoted to writing a total social history of the Third Reich, indispensable information if Germany's descent into utter darkness is ever to be satisfactorily and finally explained.

Known as the Bavaria Project, those years of research equipped Kershaw to answer the persistent question of his career: What was the ordinary German thinking and doing in the 1930s as national socialism ran rampant across the Fatherland? At hand in Bavaria was the information needed to begin to answer that question: The Nazis' own extensive year-by-year reports on the "mood of the German people," an assemblage of previously analyzed patterns of popular opinion and behavior.

In 1979 Kershaw published his first essay as a German historian in one of the Bavarian Project volumes, a piece on Bavarian anti-Semitism and popular opinion on Hitler. Both acclamatory and oppositional in its treatment of the subject, Kershaw's maiden essay exemplified his balanced scholarship within a historiography that has never taken prisoners. Thereafter followed his first monograph, published in German under the title, *The Hitler Myth* (1980).

As he read early Bavarian Nazi reports on the mood of the German people, Kershaw was struck by "how little" the persecution of the Jews invaded the everyday life of ordinary Germans. "Big anti-Jewish waves" did, however, reach "the foreground of popular opinion." Nazi attacks on the Christian churches were hugely disturbing, as were the Nuremberg Laws (1935) and the pogroms of 1938, events that exposed for both non-Jews and Jews the loose cannons their rulers really were.

Kershaw's investigations led him to conclude the "relative insignificance" of the Jewish Question in popular German opinion. For the larger population, the persecution of Jews was a rarely entertained part of daily life in the prewar years. Thus, majority German opinion toward the Jews was initially shaped by their own self-preoccupied indifference to Jews, rather than by Nazi propaganda efforts to instill "dynamic hatred" of Jews into the population. The latter, Kershaw points out, was not only unsuccessful, but also unnecessary, inasmuch as "latent anti-Semitism and apathy" were already there. As Kershaw summarizes the equation: "The road to Auschwitz was built by [Nazi] hate, but paved with [ordinary Germans'] indifference."

The big question was whether that latent anti-Semitism could readily be turned into pure Nazi gold.

Among the Israeli scholars engaging Kershaw over the years, Otto Dov Kulka challenged his scholarly caution in weighing the role of the German masses in the Holocaust. Meeting for the first time at Harvard decades ago, the two men began a lasting dialogue that has continued to the present day. Where Kershaw saw "indifference" in ordinary Germans, Kulka found "passive complicity," citing the German masses' approval of the imposition of the "Yellow Star" on the Jews and their steady commitment to the removal of all Jews from Germany.

Although Kershaw believes Hitler alone is not enough to explain Germany's 'extraordinary lurch' into radical brutality and destruction, he does find his dictatorship to be original—successful beyond any other previous ruler and regime.

In 1986, Kershaw conceded to Kulka that "indifference" was indeed "a less than ideal concept" to describe ordinary Germans' interest, or lack thereof, in the plight of the Jews. Yet, he insisted that putting it that way was not to "whitewash" the issue.

"Indifference," he now argued, was more than a "lack of concern." It was "a turning of one's back on an evil one recognized one could do nothing about," hence, a "*moral* indifference . . . compatible with the growing depersonalization of the Jews."

Thus redefining "indifference," and even conceding that it had "lethal" consequences, Kershaw held nonetheless to his term. In doing so, he was giving the majority of Germans in the Nazi era the benefit of the doubt. In the 1930s, Germans coped in a new world too, and their livelihoods and lives were also threatened. So unforgivably, if understandably, they put self before others and lost sight of the plight of the Jews. Further balancing his case, Kershaw emphatically recognized the existence of a "sizeable Nazi section of the population" that both welcomed the yellow star and later supported the death camps.

In drawing the semantic line for German culpability at "moral indifference with lethal consequences," Kershaw, perhaps courageously on this loaded issue, was refusing to pursue this line onto the path of what would, sadly, later become Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's German nation of uncountable, eager ordinary Germans "willing [to be Jewish] executioners" (1996).

Finding it impossible to know precisely what people were then thinking, Kershaw continued to urge his critics to devote their energy and wrath to "a comprehensive social history of anti-Semitism during the Weimar Republic." Therein would be found the evidence required to assign those 12 terrible years to their fair and just place in history, and assess blame and responsibility within them and beyond.

Writing at the time from the field of battle, Kershaw defended his position:

> I returned to the passivity [argument], which I saw as reflecting the low level of priority in German consciousness accorded to the fate of the Jews. . . . Pessimistically, I alluded to the questionable liberal assumptions that human beings under threat will be defended in an open society. In this, my last attempt to wrestle with the intractable sources on popular opinion and the fate of the Jews, I

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> tried to distinguish between what people then could and did not know (quite a lot), what they made of the information (an awareness that genocide . . . was taking place, though ignorance of scale and detail led to only partial comprehension), and reactions (a spectrum running from overt approval to blank condemnation, the most widespread of which being an apathetic turning away from unpalatable knowledge and events which could not be averted).

To settle up, Kershaw cites the guideline of a fellow traveler in German history, Jeffrey Herf: "The beginning of wisdom in these matters is a certain restraint and much less certainty regarding what 'ordinary Germans' made of Nazi propaganda." To which Kershaw responds that he is today "more cautious and agnostic than ever about generalized conclusions on opinions in the German population regarding the fate of the Jews." While still recognizing "a not small minority" of fanatical Germans "fully persuaded by radical propaganda," he rejects the Israeli scholars' claims of a "quite widespread" public German identification with the Third Reich from the start.

Looking forward, Kershaw urges scholars to approach the Nazi years "as if one were dealing with the French Revolution or the [Protestant] Reformation." He reminds his readers that the Nazi era, like every other, had "a [benign] social history of daily life . . . depicting under the conditions of the Nazi dictatorship a 'normality' distinct from the criminal characteristics of the regime." And he is quick also to remind one not to forget the hermeneutically rich centuries of German history that precede and succeed those years.

How different the present-day reality! Popular fascination with the Third Reich runs so deep that it has made the Nazi era sui generis, a bracketed "resort for lessons of political morality." In the absence of deep historical context and integration, the Holocaust has only grown in speculative importance, now the acclaimed "defining episode" of the entire 20th century. And thanks to what Kershaw calls "the spur of Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's flawed book," "race ideology" has also muscled sound historical analysis aside.

Sixty-three years after the Third Reich's fall, the closing of the books on the era is still obstructed by pervasive fear of a perverse whitewashing of those untouchable years, especially by the hands of the experts. When, in the mid-80s, leading German historians attempted to bring some closure to the Nazi era by treating it objectively and dispassionately, their perceived "irreverence" left still more ruined reputations and shortened careers behind. Also, scholarly efforts to compare Nazism with other contemporary "terroristic and inhuman regimes"—e.g., Stalinism, an inference that the Third Reich was a species within a larger political genre of the age—were met with moral outrage and the accusation of coddling evil.

As Kershaw sees the present situation, not until Auschwitz can be studied together with the everyday life of the Third Reich and Hitler's regime takes its place "in the continuities that led beyond 1945 into the German Federal Democratic Republic," the Nazi era that so few can take their eyes off will continue to remain the least understood in German history.

In the late 1980s, Kershaw resolved to take his case to ground zero by writing a comprehensive biography of Hitler. At the time he believed Hitler's leading biographers, Alan Bullock and Joachim Fest, had underestimated the Führer's political vision and abilities. Beyond the "ideological fanatic" everyone then agreed Hitler to be, Kershaw found a "consistent mind [that] knew how to mobilize politically" and extract everlasting loyalty. He believed Hitler's persona fitted Max Weber's concept of the "charismatic leader," typical of overpowering figures who radically change history.

In his research Kershaw stumbled upon a statement of a Nazi functionary, writing in 1934, that perfectly stated the mysterious bond he believed the Führer forged between himself and the nation. That statement was: "It is the duty of everybody to try to work towards der Führer along the lines he would wish."

In Kershaw's opinion, the dynamic of the Nazi regime came not from ordinary Germans across the land but from the Führer's "utopian vision of national redemption through racial purification." Seemingly by charisma alone, he exploited the naïve messianic hopes and illusions of post-World War I Germans, gained complete control of the instruments of Europe's most modern state, and set the guidelines its bureaucracy would loyally follow.

From the beginning, a strong, deep anti-Semitism radiated from Berlin, sealed with the Führer's prophecy that the German Jews would be destroyed in the next war. The "power of the presumed wish of the Führer," palpable throughout the nation, was "the prelude to the Final Solution."

Although Kershaw believes Hitler alone is not enough to explain Germany's "extraordinary lurch" into radical brutality and destruction, he does find his dictatorship to be original—successful beyond any other previous ruler and regime. Never before in history had such a package been so successfully delivered to so willing a people at so high a cost.

For Israelis, Germans, Americans, and all other people who today live in a true democracy, Kershaw's story of the Nazi regime is riveting history. In the 1930s the German people, Europe's presumed best and brightest, stressed by their recent history and preoccupied with their everyday lives, proved to be no match for a clever, charismatic leader and his complementary kitchen cabinet.

As people in democracies know and forget, always to their peril: A nation is not its leader, and woe to any whose leaders think they are. In every moment of its life, a nation is simply the present-day generation of people who live and work in it, marry and multiply for its future, and having given it their best, move on respectfully.

Kershaw's advice to vulnerable democracies is to study, learn, and take to heart their own history. He also suggests that, upon those occasions when one may be blinded by the bright lights of moral or political evil, do not hang around and gawk at them too long. ♦

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Terror at the 'Times'

When labor met anarchy, the result was explosive.

BY WINSTON GROOM

'Los Angeles Times' building, October 1, 1910

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Terror, Mystery, the Birth of Hollywood, and the Crime of the Century! Let's see what it's all about.

It might well have been the "Crime of the Century" at the time, since the century was only 10 years old. Subsequently, of course, it would be surpassed by serial killings, assassinations, stupendous acts of terrorism, and the O.J. Simpson case.

But by the summer of 1910, a series of labor union "terror wars" was convulsing America. This was the era of hard, violent strikes, of such creatures as "Big Bill" Haywood and the miners' unions, steelworkers, millworkers, dockworkers, and the American Federation of Labor; it was the age of Samuel Gompers, Eugene Debs, the Industrial Workers of the World (the "Wobblies"), and the alarming rise of American socialism.

American Lightning
Terror, Mystery, the Birth of Hollywood, and the Crime of the Century
by Howard Blum
Crown, 339 pp., $30.95

Everything and anything requiring more than half a dozen people—including butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers—was either unionized or being contested for unionization. And despite the rosy picture of that era later painted by movies such as *Meet Me In St. Louis* or *On Moonlight Bay*, America seethed. While anarchists, socialists, and other loonies were killing off the crowned heads of Europe, in the good ole U-S-of-A picket lines, billy clubs, riot guns, blackjacks, shivs, sabotage, boycott, assassination, and dynamite were the order of the day.

Dynamite—what a wonderful tool. Invented by Alfred Nobel, sponsor of the (of all things) Nobel Peace Prize, a single stick of dynamite was as powerful as a whole barrel of black powder, and almost immediately became the perfect weapon for surreptitiously blowing up buildings occupied by fat capitalist pigs. One of these was a bellicose tub-of-guts named Harrison Gray Otis, owner of the *Los Angeles Times*, a virulently anti-union newspaper.

At the beginning of that long, angry summer, an organization called the Bridge and Structural Iron Workers of America initiated an especially nasty walkout. Strikebreakers were brutally beaten by union thugs, and goons (toughs hired by management) returned the favor. There soon began a series of violent explosions, hundreds of them, all over the West and Midwest at nonunion plants and projects, or at industries where the ironworkers were on strike—a form of what we now call terrorism.

Even the homes of management officers were bombed and the situation threatened to get out of hand—until it finally *did* get out of hand, at 1 A.M. on the morning of October 1, 1910, when somebody planted scores of sticks of dynamite, complete with timing devices, at the new four-story *Times* building, and blew it into a smoking heap of brickbats and charcoal.

It brought the building down from the inside out; floors buckled, and the mammoth linotype machines crashed down on terrified workers in the office floors below. A gigantic fireball, fueled by burning printer's ink, exploded upwards into the newsroom, incinerating desks, typewriters, telegraph apparatus, and people.

Since the *Times* was a morning paper, many workers were still there: reporters, editors, printers, composers, engravers, linotypers, and assorted minions. Twenty-one of them were killed, and scores injured. The building was a total loss. Harrison Gray Otis was somewhere beyond furious.

As it happened, the most famous detective of the era was in Los Angeles

Winston Groom's new book, Vicksburg, 1863, *will be published in April.*

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that day. William J. Burns, a former Secret Service agent who owned one of the two largest private detective agencies in the world. Burns had been in the city to address the National Association of Bankers, whose 11,000 banks he had been hired to protect.

Otis and the mayor of Los Angeles immediately asked Burns to find the killers. Burns agreed on the condition that he would be accountable to no one until the culprits were caught, and the agreement was sealed, along with a $100,000 reward (more than $2 million today) for bringing the perpetrators to justice.

As it happened, two other dynamite bombs had been planted that day, one at the home of Otis himself, and another at one of his associates', but the latter bomb had been defused before it went off. Burns said he wanted to see it. In the meantime, he ordered his operatives in Illinois to send him another unexploded bomb they had found at a non-union railroad yard in Peoria. When he compared it with the Los Angeles bomb, it was obvious they had been made by the same person: Not only were the alarm clock timing devices made by the same New England clock company, but the soldering and wiring were identical. He concluded that a considerable conspiracy was afoot.

Burns managed to trace the dynamite in the Los Angeles bomb to a San Francisco explosives dealer and, armed with a description of the buyer, track him to a thousand-strong colony of socialist-anarchists who had encamped in a remote forest on Puget Sound. From there, Burns discovered that the culprit had connections to the headquarters of the Structural Ironworkers union in Indianapolis, where there had recently been a half dozen more bombings.

It was sterling detective work, and before long, Burns was able to finger a high officer of the Ironworkers, as well as his brother, and another accomplice, as conspirators in the *Times* bombing, and Burns carted them back to Los Angeles on his own. He also managed to link another 55 high-ranking members of the ironworkers' union as being mixed up, one way or another, in all of the bombings.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Big Labor, infuriated, struck back with everything it had. It claimed Burns had "kidnapped" the suspects to California, and managed to get Burns indicted for it. It also played liberal newspapers for all they were worth. Most important, however, it hired a man to defend the accused who was the most famous leftist mouthpiece of the day.

Clarence Darrow, who had just got the socialist labor leader Big Bill Haywood off the hook for murdering the governor of Idaho during a mineworkers strike, looms large in this tale. He was broke, lovelorn, jaded, and hapless to overcome the overwhelming body of evidence that Burns had assembled against his clients.

Harrison Gray Otis

In desperation, and with nearly limitless resources (nearly $9 million in today's money) provided by Samuel Gompers' AFL, Darrow ordered his staff to bribe a half dozen of Burns' witnesses, along with two jurors, one of whom, in the end, provided state's evidence against Darrow, resulting in his indictment for witness/juror tampering.

The evidence against the bombing conspirators was devastating. Witnesses could finger them purchasing the dynamite in San Francisco. Dynamite was found by Burns in the vaults at union headquarters in Indianapolis, and more was stored in a barn to which the accomplice who turned states evidence led Burns. Keys found on a union official's desk fit the locks on the dynamite cases. Clocks were also found exactly like the ones used as timers on the unexploded bombs. Not least, the accomplice had made a full written confession—although Darrow said he only did so to save his neck.

In the meantime, a thorny problem brewed up that kept the bombing culprits from the hangman's noose. It was composed of two seemingly unrelated parts. The first is the easier to understand: Los Angeles's merchants became fearful that, with all the dynamite floating around, if the two conspirators were convicted and the death sentence handed down, all their businesses might be targeted by enraged union workers. It probably wasn't an idle fear: Around the same time, some nut planted a dynamite bomb on a railroad trestle near Santa Barbara, set to go off when President William Howard Taft's train rolled over it.

Lincoln Steffens, usually described as a muckraking journalist but who was no better than a common socialist, came to Los Angeles to "blow the trial apart," so to speak. He declared in his newspaper column that dynamiting people was not only justifiable but acceptable behavior, since labor/socialists were engaged in a legitimate war against capitalists. Steffens argued that Darrow should persuade the men to confess to their crime and defend them on the grounds that they were no more guilty than soldiers who kill the enemy.

The second part of the problem was that there was an upcoming mayoral election in Los Angeles, and the socialist candidate appeared to be winning. Again, the merchants and businessmen were fearful of that eventuality, and believed that, if the bombers were hanged, there would be a backlash and the socialist candidate would take office. If, however, the men agreed to plead guilty, a deal could be struck to keep them from the gallows while casting the labor/socialist candidate's party in a bad light.

That was what came about. One of the men received life in prison, and the other 15 years. The accomplice was spared because of his singing. The other 55 back in Indianapolis were tried in a federal court, and 38 were convicted.

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The bombings stopped. The socialist was defeated for mayor of Los Angeles.

There remained the matter of Darrow's witness/juror tampering, the evidence of which was indisputable. Darrow was put on trial and, after his attorney proved to be a drunk, he took over his own defense. Darrow made a long (one-and-a-half day), rambling, emotional appeal, which left him and everyone else, including the jury, sobbing. Indeed, it so moved the panel that they performed a "jury nullification," of the sort seen in the O.J. Simpson case, and Darrow was acquitted—not once, but twice!

So there you have it. Well, not quite. While all these thing were going on, the author has decided to cram the classic filmmaker D.W. Griffith into a sort of shadow plot that has practically nothing to do with the story, except that it has recently become commercially popular in these kinds of histories to "compare and contrast" (or so they used to say in high school) simultaneous events or characters in order to flesh out the story.

Griffith's tenuous connection is that he had met the detective Burns many years earlier, and was making movies in California at the time of the trial. The irony here is that, since Griffith is today widely considered a racist because of his *Birth of a Nation*, the author is forced to climb all over himself excoriating the best known film of one of the heroes of his book, concluding in the end that Griffith somehow patterned the Klansmen in *Birth of a Nation* on the oppressed laborers who took to dynamite terrorism to settle their disputes!

The book itself? I shake my head. I shook it while reading the book. I am not familiar with Blum's earlier works, but it appears that, in this instance, he has created a new genre—the "docubook." It is sort of like what docudrama film people do when they give a historical character, or characters, lines to say where there is no evidence that they ever said them—in other words, made-up dialogue.

Blum is, I hope, a better historian than to crib up phony dialogue, but he apparently is not above assigning his characters all sorts of phony—or at least unprovable—thoughts and emotions. Thus, running throughout the story, you have sentences such as these: "He had never felt as vulnerable." Or: "He felt as if he were racing against a ticking clock." (My recently retired editor at Knopf, Ash Green, would cringe at such statements, and scribble a margin note: "How do you know this?")

These unfortunate moments of what might be called advanced schoolgirl writing serve to undermine the credibility, rather than enhance the tension or drama, of what is otherwise a very good story, and Blum's decision to refer to the main characters by their first names is annoying because it is confusing.

Likewise, he flings off adjectives like a wet dog shaking off drops of water. Tear open the book anywhere to facing pages and you might encounter, as I did, stillnesses that are terrible, flames that are inescapable, thoughts that seesaw, bearings that are gilded, attorneys who are relentless, operatives who are diligent, and so forth.

As I was writing this I bumped into an English professor friend who wore a T-shirt emblazoned with "Simplicity Is Everything." It's not a bad slogan, and reminded me of *American Lightning*. None of us is perfect, but it left me wondering: Where were the editors on this project? The sad truth is that there aren't many good editors anymore, the old-style craftsmen who would shape and cut and worry over every sentence until they made it as right as it was going to get. Today, editors are largely book-buyers—but that's another story.

That aside, it's a good read about an intriguing period in American history, and Howard Blum's analysis in most aspects is usefully penetrating. It's worth the price and time, which is how I judge books. ♦

A Monetary Problem

Learning—and forgetting—the lessons of inflation.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

When the teaching of economics involved a bit more common sense and a lot less mathematics, we told our students that inflation occurred when there was too much money chasing too few goods. As always, Milton Friedman said it better: "Inflation is always and everywhere a monetary phenomenon."

The Great Inflation and Its Aftermath
The Past and Future of American Affluence
by Robert J. Samuelson
Random House, 336 pp., $26

To Robert J. Samuelson, the distinguished and always sensible *Washington Post* and *Newsweek* columnist, it is something more than that. The economy, he argues, "is a social, political and psychological process . . . changes in ideas, institutions, values and beliefs can alter the economy just as much—and sometimes more than—new technologies, changes in prices or shifts in interest rates."

A bit mushy for the taste of most economists, especially those who would capture the working of our economy in an econometric model. But an idea worth considering.

As is Samuelson's argument that the great inflation that began in the mid-1960s—and that Ronald Reagan finally squashed, not without inflicting considerable but temporary pain on workers who lost their jobs—

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profoundly affected "how Americans felt about themselves and their society; how they voted and the nature of their politics; how businesses operated and treated their workers; and how the American economy was connected with the rest of the world. . . . Stable prices provide a sense of security. . . . They are like safe streets."

This is not the place to recite Samuelson's carefully drawn history of that inflation. The book is accessible enough for any interested lay reader, and of great relevance to the situation in which we find ourselves today. Samuelson reviews the variety of measures politicians adopted to fight inflation: Richard Nixon's wage and price controls, Lyndon Johnson's jawboning of steelmakers and imposition of restrictions on exports of hides to keep leather and shoe prices down, and Jimmy Carter's appointment of an "inflation czar." All of these moves made matters worse by obscuring the essential nature of inflation.

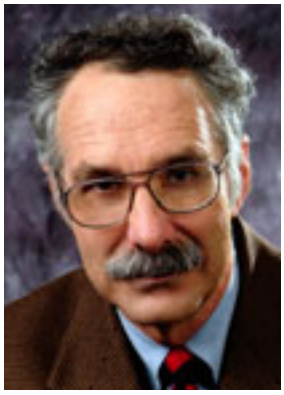
Nor was the Federal Reserve much help: "Through its history, the Fed has made many small errors but only two major blunders. The first was permitting the Great Depression; the second was fostering the Great Inflation." Both of those blunders "stemmed from mistaken ideas that informed the political and intellectual climate" of their day. Among them were the views that it is possible to concede only a bit more inflation to get faster economic growth (the Phillips Curve); that monetary policy has severe limits as an inflation-fighting tool; that we had to grow faster lest the Soviet Union leave us in its wake; that full employment and economic perfection was ours for the taking if only we got policy right; and that there is "an administrative solution to inflation."

Which brings us back to Milton Friedman. These misapprehensions, and political pressure to keep the economy red hot, lured successive Fed chairmen into keeping monetary policy looser than it should have been, resulting in too much money chasing too few goods. Inflation, it seems, is indeed a monetary phenomenon.

Fast forward to today, and an environment in which deflation tops inflation as policymakers' principal concern. This book was completed before the credit crisis, the massive government response, and a renewed acceptance of the idea that monetary policy is too weak a tool to rely on when the economy is in distress. But it has important lessons for us.

A "central lesson" that Samuelson would have us learn from the Great Inflation and the policy responses to it is "that ambitious efforts to remedy obvious economic shortcomings can actually make matters worse—that happened then, and it could happen now. The law of unintended consequences went into overdrive and might again."

Even more relevant, and far scarier in light of President-elect Obama's rallying of the best and the brightest of the economic profession, is this warning, one that should cause Barack Obama to wake up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat:



Robert J. Samuelson

> What is relevant for our era is that these [failed] policies were not undertaken on ignorant whim. Rather, they embodied the thinking of the nation's top economists, reflecting a broad consensus among their peers. It was the scholarly respectability of these ideas . . . that recommended them to political leaders and made them easier to sell to the public. . . . A plethora of new taxes, spending programs and regulations, each of which may seem justifiable or involve small cost, could coalesce into a larger burden. The economy's growth could suffer death by a thousand cuts when no individual cut might matter much.

Now we have entrusted policymaking to a group so loaded with Ivy Leaguers that David Brooks has warned that a terrorist attack on the Harvard-Yale game might bring the government to a halt. Let's hope that Obama, himself a university-bred intellectual, is aware that the Great Inflation's "intellectual godfathers were without exception men of impressive intelligence. They were credentialed by some of the nation's outstanding universities. . . . Academic pedigree alone is no guarantor of useful knowledge and wisdom. Skepticism ought to qualify and restrain our reformist impulses."

And yet reform is needed—reform of our entitlements program, our immigration policy, our environmental and energy policies, to mention just a few that weigh on Samuelson's mind. And reform of regulation of financial institutions, one that weighs on mine.

Rahm Emmanuel has said that the current crisis is an opportunity. If he means an opportunity to launch New Deal Mach II, we are in for some trouble. But if he means an opportunity for his supercool, intellectual boss to sift through the crisis-fighting ideas that will be thrown at him by his lineup of academic superstars, selecting those that will provide immediate help but eventually reduce the role of government in economic life—leave government a strengthened referee but a less important player—we might, just might, avoid some of the policy errors that Samuelson so vividly describes.

If Samuelson errs, it is in attaching too much importance to policymaking. There is a great big economy in the real world beyond Washington. Entrepreneurs have taken, and will take again, risks; venture capitalists will find money to enable them to pursue their dreams; Americans like to work, and work hard; the economy has, in the end, survived the errors of the Washington-centric policy types who have never met a payroll (an oldie but goodie) and will never sell what Charles Krauthammer calls a Schumermobile, which is Sen. Charles Schumer's price for a GM bailout.

With all of Samuelson's worries, and most are worth losing some sleep over, we have moved from economic triumph to economic triumph, stumbling at times but making the needed adjustments along the way. We have our problems, and some will not be solved. But capitalism still deserves the two cheers Irving Kristol bestowed on it three decades ago. ♦

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Algeria's Patriot

The meaning for the present of France's colonial past.

BY ROGER KAPLAN

The Algerian military-religious leader Abd el-Kader fought and lost a 15-year war to resist the French conquest of his country following the French overthrow of the previous colonial power, the waning Ottoman Turks. Later, exiled by the French in considerable pomp and honor to Damascus, he resumed a career as a religious teacher working toward Christian-Muslim *entente*.

Commander of the Faithful
The Life and Times of Emir Abd el-Kader
by John W. Kiser
Monkfish, 400 pp., $28.95

John Kiser's elegant biography, with just enough contextual history to allow the reader to situate a Sufi mystic tribal leader in his times, ought to be of interest to anyone trying to figure out whether or not we should sigh and embrace another 150 years of Huntingtonian pessimism regarding clashing civilizations.

In the mid-19th century, Abd el-Kader was the most famous Arab in the world, after Egypt's Mehmet Ali (who was Albanian). He remains famous in France and North Africa, but has been largely neglected in the historical memories of other countries. The fact is that, notwithstanding his own (and his French adversaries') belief that he had achieved peace with honor and it was time to turn the page, he remains something of an original, with neither precedents nor sequels, in the history of civilizations in conflict around the Mediterranean and the Fertile Crescent. Some of his writings are in print. They are not, evidently, much studied in the precincts of Foggy Bottom—or, for that matter, the Quai d'Orsay.

There ought to be a reason for this. It is readily understandable why a military-religious genius who happened to be a man of exceptional personal decency should be a historical hero in Algeria. Fighting against a technologically and numerically superior foe—fighting, moreover, according to a code that in many respects was far more honorable, or *chivalresque* as we might say, than the scorched-earth-kill-'em-all battalions of rogue generals devoured by personal ambition—Abd el-Kader is the personification of what every nation sooner or later needs if it is to endure and triumph in the long term: a Lost Cause, a defeat and humiliation by foreign aggressors from which eventually it recovers.

Kiser explains why Abd el-Kader remains of interest to the French, who know something about losing, and it is clear enough why the Algerians would keep him among their National Best. Abd el-Kader gave up in the end, unwilling to lead people to slaughter in a war he knew he could not win, either militarily or politically; but resistance to French rule persisted and, of course, it had its day finally, in 1962, with mixed results.

But elsewhere? Abd el-Kader is known in the African-Arab world and the larger Muslim world, but how well and to what consequence? If Arab-Islamic culture cannot produce another such leader, what does this prove? Or conversely, is Abd el-Kader far more a precursor than we realize, and would he consider today's jihads as justifiable as the ones he proclaimed? Kiser wisely prefers to leave these questions implied and unanswered, but he provides material for thinking about them.

The Arab wars have been, from the beginning, internal as well as external. If the *umma* (the Muslim community as a whole) constantly must do battle with *fitna* (mischief) in the rear, how can a single unifying leader ever emerge to credibly and victoriously fight, or negotiate with, an external adversary? The Algerians themselves have understood this better than most, and it is not accidental that they have produced a line of diplomats who have served *ex officio*, grappling with conflicts not directly involving their country and addressing bottle-necked issues with supranational schemes.

For in the end, Abd el-Kader *did not get his act together*. This is a crude way to put it, and Kiser makes a strong case that no one else could have come as close as he did. But disunity among the tribes could not be overcome, while the French consolidated their hold on the Mediterranean port cities and learned to fight on the hard terrain of Algeria.

Kiser refers to Abd el-Kader as an Arab, but he would have referred to himself as an Arab mainly by contrast to the Ottoman Turks, who had been ruling North Africa for the better part of four centuries. Abd el-Kader thought of himself as a Muslim. His people were the clans of the Hachem tribes that spread from east to west across present-day Algeria. The broader population was a melting pot of indigenous Berbers, Arabs, Oriental Jews, and sub-Saharan Africans. The Jews, with strong linguistic skills and connections among the French, were among his best sources of intelligence.

Leaving aside fine points of identity politics, however, there have been few, if any, military leaders on the Arab side as successful as Abd el-Kader, not only in warfare but in the politics of nation-building, though on that score his ultimate failure was one of the reasons he decided to stop fighting the French. According to Kiser, Abd el-Kader taught that the Koran specifically enjoins military leaders to avoid wars in which lives will be lost for no gain—which is another way of saying that soldiers do not exist for the sake of their commanders' vanity.

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A superb horseman and brilliant tactician who specialized in the long-distance raid against better equipped but slower forces, Abd el-Kader was also a strict disciplinarian who punished his men for decapitating fallen enemies when they could have been decapitating standing ones. He also fully appreciated the value of peace. There have been very few Muslims as willing to seek a reconciliation of civilizations on the basis of what might be called liberal values for the here and now and monotheism for the transcendent evermore. Abd el-Kader proclaimed jihad against France on the grounds that it would be heretical to allow non-Muslims to govern a Muslim territory; he called off jihad when he gave up the fight in 1847. As far as anyone knows, no other modern Muslim spiritual-military leader, certainly not one of his stature and renown, has ever done this.

So was he, on this score, hopelessly out of touch with public opinion in Arab countries? Possibly—unless it is the politicians who have been missing the point for a century-and-a-half. The "street," at least in the voice of popular *rai* (blues) singers, still admires him, considers him a master to learn from and emulate in matters of love as well as war.

His contemporary admirers included most of the French military class, keen observers of the French conquest of Algeria such as Alexis de Tocqueville and Abraham Lincoln, among others. But France did not repay Abd el-Kader with a bigness of spirit commensurate with his. To the contrary, the French betrayed his trust in the peace-with-honor he had agreed to and, in an eerie precursor of an episode during the independence war of the 1950s, hijacked him with family and entourage when he thought he had safe passage. The story of Abd el-Kader is a real-life illustration of Rudyard Kipling's "Ballad of East and West." Despite the deep respect with which men on both sides of the French-Algerian clash regarded one another, nothing really came of it: Respect did not lead to meeting. Abd el-Kader ended his life in Damascus, living on a French pension, and the French never found a way to make Muslims feel comfortable with their rule in North Africa. Conflict was bound to come again, as Tocqueville warned, and it did.

Of course, no two countries are the same—nor two "savage wars of peace," nor revolutions, terrorist campaigns, or civil wars. We can learn from history on condition that we understand it is history. The French-Algerian clash of civilizations, which went on for 132 years, and is presently in the 47th year of its sequel, is surely instructive; but no other Christian country is like France, and no other Muslim country is like Algeria. And no two adversaries produced such soldiers as the Emir Abd el-Kader and the general, later marshal, who finally overcame him through scorched earth and serial massacres, forced relocations and the deployment of light cavalry, Thomas Robert Bugeaud.

Abd el-Kader

ANGE TISSIER

As he did in *The Monks of Tibhirine*, his powerful account of the murder of Trappist monks in Algeria during the terror that shook the country in the 1990s, Kiser is at his best sketching characters by showing them at critical moments in their lives. Bugeaud and Abd el-Kader were studies in contrast: Sons of privilege, the future emir was a model of filial obedience while the future Marquis de la Piconnerie and Marshal of France was a truculent rebel who ran away from home and enlisted, to the dismay of his aristocratic family, as a private in the Napoleonic army.

Both, however, were essentially conservative men: Abd el-Kader remained steadfast to his inherited duties and responsibilities, instructing his people that the beginning and end of man is to be found through religious devotion; Bugeaud had a stormy career in politics and the army, becoming at once one of the more influential anti-republican leaders of his time and a champion of progress, promoting engineering projects to develop Algeria's rich agricultural potential.

Abd el-Kader revered political authority when he thought it was wisely exercised: He and Louis Napoleon had something of a mutual admiration society. Kept under house arrest in France with a substantial entourage, Abd el-Kader successfully petitioned the emperor to let him live in exile, first in Turkey and then in Damascus. There he intervened to halt a massacre of Levantine Christians launched by Druze and Arab tribesmen. (Some historians believe the violence was instigated by the Ottomans, and if not stopped, might well have prefigured the Armenian massacres a generation later.) For this he was widely honored, with Abraham Lincoln, in particular, saluting this early form of trans-racial—Abd el-Kader would have insisted trans-religious—human rights interventionism.

Kiser commands the voluminous non-Arabic literature on the period, including the many biographies of Abd el-Kader, and wears his erudition lightly. Without any editorializing, *Commander of the Faithful* suggests that, on both sides, the problem consists of failure to attack what might be called the Abd el-Kader Question.

That question is this: Why, faced with a magnanimous and heroic adversary, did the French end up behaving treacherously as colonial masters? On the other side, notwithstanding their defeat, why did the Arabs fail to follow Abd el-Kader's teachings? The true jihad, he thought, consisted of fighting for the commandments contained in Islam, which is simply a tautological way of saying a Muslim is, by definition, a jihadist. But jihad in his conception is not war against infidels but the struggle, spiritual more than anything else, to come to terms in common devotion to the supreme being.

Why so few Arab thinkers have walked in the footsteps of this remarkable man might well be an interesting subject for another book. ♦

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Bork in Retrospect

Writer, scholar, philosopher of the law.

BY GREGORY J. SULLIVAN

"The most serious defect in the American system of government as it currently operates," observes Lino Graglia, "the source of many of America's most intractable problems, is the policymaking role assigned to itself by the Supreme Court."

No one has recognized this crisis with the perspicacity of Robert Bork. The defeat of his nomination to the Supreme Court in 1987 was the most consequential loss for conservatism in many decades. The only benefit is that Bork went on to write *The Tempting of America: The Political Seduction of the Law* (1990), a masterly defense of his originalist method of constitutional interpretation and a scathing portrait of the senatorial hacks (one of whom was just elected vice president) who derailed his nomination.

A Time to Speak
Selected Writings and Arguments
by Robert H. Bork
ISI, 750 pp., $30

Over his career, Bork has written extensively on constitutional law in a way that is particularly accessible to nonspecialists, and those writings have been gathered in this large and rewarding collection. In constitutional matters, Bork's primary concern has been what he has called the Madisonian dilemma: That is, the American constitutional structure is essentially majoritarian, with only a small but important list of rights placed beyond the control of majorities.

> The dilemma is that neither the majority nor the minority can be trusted to define the proper spheres of democratic authority and individual liberty. The first would court tyranny by the majority; the second, tyranny by the minority.

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The American tradition assigns to the judiciary the job of policing these spheres of authority and liberty. The enduring problem of judicial review is: How do we police the judiciary? The only restraint must be self-imposed, and that restraint is found in the interpretive doctrine of originalism, where courts are bound to ascertain and apply the original understanding of the constitutional provision at issue. Original understanding is to be contrasted with a "living" Constitution, where jurists supplant original meaning with current understanding, transforming the process into a continuous constitutional convention. Under a living Constitution, our system has become one of judicial supremacy. Bork has been the most illuminating critic of this corruption throughout his career. In one erudite essay after another—from his seminal 1971 article on "Neutral Principles and Some First Amendment Problems" in the *Indiana Law Journal* onwards—he has exposed the willfulness and arbitrariness of constitutional interpretation untethered to text and history. But even as prescient a writer and thinker as Bork could not anticipate the reach of Supreme Court radicalism.

In a 1984 lecture entitled "Tradition and Morality in Constitutional Law," Bork argued that "it is unlikely, of course, that a general constitutional doctrine of the impermissibility of legislating moral standards will ever be framed." Unlikely but not, alas, impossible. In the 2003 case of *Lawrence* v. *Texas*, the Court's theology of personal autonomy reached something of a nadir with the majority's constitutional embrace of homosexual conduct—a ruling that probably eradicates the state's authority to regulate any conduct on the basis of morality at all.

To be sure, the greatest enemies of original understanding come from the left, but there are conservatives who seek to import natural-law ideas into constitutional interpretation. Bork rejects this extraconstitutional source of rights as well. Among the more absorbing parts of *A Time to Speak* are found in the exchanges Bork has with these scholars. In one section, the arguments of Russell Hittinger, Hadley Arkes, and William Bentley Ball, all proponents for the use of natural law in constitutional judging, are set forth with Bork's response. In the end, Bork demonstrates that his constitutional positivism is the only acceptable way to avoid limitless judicial discretion—which is to say, a different form of government in fact—from theories of either the natural-law right or the living-Constitution left.

Bork writes almost exclusively about ideas, but his essay on Sir Thomas More is a truly astute portrait of that complex man. Drawing on the 1998 life by Peter Ackroyd—one of the great biographical portraits of the age—Bork reaches precisely the right understanding of More's importance, and how that importance is obscured by modern confusions:

> Yet it seems wrong, or at least potentially misleading, to attribute More's behavior to "selfhood." It is a symptom of our disorder that we glorify, practically deify, the individual conscience. It was not always so. It must have been well into this century before "civil disobedience" and "heresy" became terms of praise. To the contrary, More's behavior may be seen as submission to external authority, a conscious and difficult *denial* of self.

In addition to the constitutional clashes, this volume also contains cogent essays on international and antitrust law, the independent-counsel law, and moving and insightful appreciations of the great constitutional scholar Alexander Bickel, who was also Bork's closest personal friend.

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And there are notes on getting martinis right. (On the correct response when an olive is proposed for the drink: "When I want a salad, I'll ask for it.") To the law and all these other subjects, Bork brings a quintessentially conservative temperament: a profound distrust of abstractions and a realistic sense of the flawed nature of man.

Because of his extraordinary lifelong defense of originalism, the doctrine, though very much besieged in the law schools, now has prominent adherents on the bench. On the current Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas, and Samuel Alito all, to one degree or another, interpret the Constitution along originalist lines. As Thomas noted with Borkian clarity in a recent lecture, "There are really only two ways to interpret the Constitution: try to discern as best we can what the framers intended, or make it up." No one has written with greater trenchancy, learning, and eloquence than Robert Bork on the menace of a judiciary that makes it up. ♦

Unreasonable Doubt

As D.H. Lawrence said, trust the tale, not the teller.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

John Patrick Shanley won a Pulitzer Prize for his play *Doubt*, which he has now brought to the screen as writer and director.

Shanley claims *Doubt* is a study in ambiguity. The year is 1964. A rigid nun (Meryl Streep) believes a charming priest (Philip Seymour Hoffman) is up to no good. She possesses total certainty, and she enlists a naïve younger nun (Amy Adams) in her crusade. The naïve nun doesn't know what to think or whom to believe, and indeed there is no way anyone can know for sure. In the preface to the published script of the play, Shanley writes, "We've got to learn to live with a full measure of uncertainty. There is no last word." He claims he has revealed the truth about the priest only to the actors who have played the part.

Doubt
Directed by John Patrick Shanley

Doubt is a nearly perfect piece of theater. It has four characters, hurtles forward like a freight train over the course of an intermissionless 90 minutes, and leaves the audience devastated. The movie is longer and fussier, and features all manner of ludicrous flourishes, such as powerful breezes intended to represent the "winds of change" and skewed camera angles that are supposed to capture the off-kilter emotions of the protagonists but remind one of nothing so much as the scenes on the old *Batman* television show from the 1960s featuring the Joker and the Riddler.

Shanley is not a good director of his own work. His only previous directorial credit was on *Joe versus the Volcano*, an ambitious and clever screenplay he mangled into a cinematic stillbirth in 1991. This time, he was clearly so abashed to be working with Streep and Hoffman that he did nothing to rein them in. They both turn in the worst performances of their careers. Streep, in particular, is simply dreadful, mincing and pursing her lips and speaking in an indecipherable accent—in marked contrast to Cherry Jones, who essayed the role on Broadway in a titanic turn that will be remembered for decades.

It may seem odd that Shanley would prove so ham-fisted in translating his own work to the screen, especially considering his conviction that *Doubt* can only be understood by the most subtle of intelligences.

But Shanley's certitude about the lack of certitude in his play demonstrates why it was a mistake to put him at the helm of the movie version, since it proves he is an even worse interpreter of his own work than he is a director of it. Such things do happen; it was precisely for this reason that D.H. Lawrence once advised readers to trust the tale, not the teller.

Doubt works not because the story is ambiguous, but because it is *not* ambiguous. It is, rather, a potent and unforgettable account of systemic injustice. Both movie and play have a hero and a villain. The villain appears to be the hero, and the hero appears to be the villain, and that is what makes *Doubt* initially compelling. When we discover that things are not what they first seem to be, we discover the true horror in the situation that confronts us. The hero is basically powerless. The villain is institutionally powerful. The question is not who did wrong but whether the wrongdoer can, in fact, be stopped when the hero has no means of doing so.

The only way to perceive the story of *Doubt* differently would require us to believe that an unspeakable act is actually a gesture of kindness. Shanley does ask us at one point to imagine that this might be the case in the only scene in the play and movie that stretches credulity to the breaking point. We are supposed to imagine that a put-upon working-class black woman in 1964—Viola Davis, who may win an Oscar for best supporting actress largely because she goes without a tissue for a few minutes—would possess an attitude so profoundly progressive that she would put the video-making opponents of California's Proposition 8 to shame.

Perhaps such a woman existed in 1964. But there is room for, dare I say it, doubt. ♦

John Podhoretz, editorial director of Commentary, *is* The Weekly Standard*'s movie critic.*

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"Ms. Clinton and the future Barack Obama administration would be better served if Mr. Clinton were to direct his prodigious energies elsewhere for the duration of her service."
—**Washington Post** *editorial, December 21, 2008*

January 6, 2009

'For the Sake of My Wife,' Clinton Leaves Foundation

Former President's Plans Include Travel, 'Dancing with the Stars'

By Lori Montgomery
Washington Post Staff Writer

With mounting concern over potential conflicts of interest involving donations to the William J. Clinton Foundation—and before Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton is even confirmed as the next secretary of state—former President Bill Clinton announced he would take leave from his foundation effective immediately and not return until his wife steps down from the State Department. "As much as I want to continue helping solve the world's problems," said Mr. Clinton, "I do not want to make things difficult for Hillary, who, by the way, will make a terrific secretary of state—the kind you'd want to have around for at least four, if not eight years, maybe more…. So for the sake of my wife, I will focus my energies in other areas that will not get me or her into any trouble." Mr. Clinton said he intends to travel, mentioning Bora Bora, Cabo San Lucas, and Bangkok. He will also be competing in the next season of "Dancing with the Stars" on ABC.

Mr. Clinton said he was particularly struck by the skill of the nonprofessional dancers on the show: "That Brooke Burke, I tell you, she has mounds of talent." He readily admits, however, that taking on this new assignment will not be easy. "We've got a long way to go, but I've been training almost every day. With Brooke Burke. Down in Cabo San Lucas." Clinton's choice of dance for the opening round of competition is the lambada: "I don't know if you know this, but it's called the forbidden dance. I told Brooke I forbid her to hold back."

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bill Clinton trains with Brooke Burke for the next season of 'Dancing with the Stars.'

And while a Secretary of State Clinton might be visiting foreign capitals and possibly brokering peace agreements, Bill Clinton will be playing it safe, making a cameo appearance on "Desperate Housewives," kayaking down the Colorado River on "The Amazing Race," learning how to grease ramekins with Nigella Lawson, and making sticky buns with Giada De Laurentiis.

Later in the year, Mr. Clinton will compete in the next installment of the CBS reality series "Survivor." The former president admitted he was intrigued by the location of this next season, which happens to take place on the Greek island of Les-

See HEDONISM III, *A69*

Bush to Blagojevich: 'I'm More Popular Than You Are!'

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